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Flower-o'-the-Corn

Cinderella

Kit Kennedy

J. C. Motson

KID McGHIE

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A SORDID HEAP OF RAGS AND TATTERS LYING FACE DOWN ON THE PATH.

KID McGHIE

A NUGGET OF DIM GOLD

BY

S. R. CROCKETT

WITH FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

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KID McGHIE

CHAPTER I

THE KID SUCCEEDS TO HIS TITLE

ALEXANDER McGHIE was not always a bad boy, as boys went in Kirkmessan, his native place, but he was always the Kid—or more at large, Daft Mag McGhie's Kid. He had a father also, bound to the Mag aforesaid by every tie of law and gospel. David was his name, and his forefathers had been respectable men, marrying respectable wives, till in the fulness of time, Davie, last and least of the race, tarrying at Portnessock Fair, fell in with Mag Caigton.

After that the descent to Avernus (or any other descent) was easy indeed. Mag Caigton had a towsy, blowsy, hearty-come-hearty-go way with her, which, when she was yet in her teens, did David McGhie's business for this life, and left him but a narrow squeak for it in the next.

The Kid was nine years of age and already known to all Kirkmessan—from the turnip-girthed provost in his white waistcoat to the waifs and strays of the Back Mill Lands where the Kid dwelt—when his father, to get away from the clitter-clatter which on washing-days filled all Back Mill Lands, took his only son for a walk.

"Eh, faither," said the Kid to his companion, "but what garred ye do it?"

"Do what?" demanded David, looking very queer.

"Mairry a woman like yon?" remarked the far-seeing youth.

"Faith, and that's what I am often askin' mysel'!" said David McGhie, instinctively answering as if he had been speaking to a man and an equal. Most of his wife's qualities were indeed common property—his sorrows the town talk. The very bairns, when they saw him coming past the school at the play hour, would run to the iron railings, crying with one voice:

> "Willie Wastle dwalt on Tweed,
> The spot they caa'ed it Linkumdoddie—
> Siccan a wife as Willie had,
> I wadna gie a button for her!"

In the course of their walk David drew the Kid into a wood, and said to him quietly, as if he had brought something good to eat, for which he had been groping in his pocket, "D'ye see that?"

That was a pistol with two barrels, of the more ancient sort, throwing a ball three times the diameter of that of a modern repeating rifle. All this happened some few years ago, and they hang such pistols on walls now. They were common then, and used for killing things.

"Kid," said his father—that is to say, David McGhie, Esquire, of Back Mill Lands, in the town of Kirkmessan—"ye see this?"

"Aye," said the Kid, "it's a wee gun. Where gat ye sic a bonny pistol, daddy? Is it yours, and can I get the lend o't to shoot sparrows wi'? an' young corbies—an' maybes an odd rabbit, wha kens?"

His father shook his head slowly and sadly.

"I borrowed it, Kid," he answered, "but for no such purpose. It shall never be said that David McGhie, wha's forbears lie in the kirkyard yonder, demeaned himsel' to poachin' rabbits an' ither vermin!"

"What is't, then," cried the Kid, "and can I come wi' ye, daddy? I'll keep brave an' quiet i' the covers. Never ye doubt it! I hae been there afore wi' Steenie Gormack, the poacher lad. Tell me, daddy! Is it pheasants or (here he sunk his voice to a whisper) is it the deer, or some ither big game that I haena seen?"

"Aye, 'deed," said his father, "it's big game, sonny!"

"Tell me—oh, tell me, daddy. I'm a' in a reestle to ken. My very taes, they winna keep quiet!"

But his father, sitting on a fallen tree (a spruce it was, with curious dark feathery plumes like a hearse, as the Kid remembered after), kept him some time waiting. He seemed to have a difficulty in speaking. Something the matter with his throat, the Kid thought. Perhaps he had been eating corn, and had half-swallowed one of the "beards." Nasty things they were, too! The Kid knew.

Then at last David McGhie, Esq., the son of an excellent family, spoke:

"Aye, it's big game that this bit lump o' lead is for, Kid—big, big game! *It's for you an' me, sonny!* No, dinna rin awa'. Ye shall hae your chance after—after I hae spoken to ye, sonny. Sit still the noo!"

And with the failing strength of an arm that once could swing the broadaxe with any man, David McGhie pinned his son to the trunk of the spruce, and held him in place by means of a leg hooked across his knees. Then he leaned back and began to load the big horse pistol carefully.

"Be never feared, laddie," he said, "it's a great sin I am to commit. I ken that. But to live on as I hae been doin' is so mickle greater a sin, that I hae

a kind o' hope that I may be forgiven. Because my mind is made up——"

"Made up to what? No to kill yourself—no to kill me, daddy?"

The Kid's voice was low and hoarse now. He did not recognise himself speaking, though he knew that these were something like the words he wanted to say.

"To pit an end to my puir wretched days, sonny," said David McGhie, with the slow-coming determination of a weak man who hardly ever determines anything. "Mine be the sin, Alec. Mine—mine—mine! But there is nae ither way for it, Kid, that I can see!"

"Let us rin awa'!" said the Kid, eagerly.

"Useless—useless!" groaned his father. "She wad catch us afore ever we got to Carlisle. And, forbye, I promised yon things afore the minister, 'Till death us do pairt'—that was what he made me say. And I said it. It's little that is left to the McGhies thae days, but it will surely be permitted to the last o' them to keep his word. Aye, the last o' them, laddie. For though ye bear my name, ye hae never the McGhie nature. Ye are your mither's son——"

"Oh, no, faither," cried the Kid, bursting into tears of absolute terror at the accusation, "dinna say that, faither! Dinna deny me—dinna say I am no your Kid!"

David McGhie stopped his cleaning out of the pistol nipples to lay his hand on his son's head.

"Deny ye—never, laddie, never," he said; "I forgot that I was talkin' o' what a bairn could never understand. But there is Caigton bluid in ye, Alec, my man, and that's no guid bluid. Airchie Caigton died on the gallows—that's your uncle; your grandfaither, Auld Pate, was killed in a smugglin' tulzie down at the Burnfoot. They say your granny's mither was burned for a witch at Portnessock. And

your ain mither—but that's maybe somedeal my faut—has been afore the sheriff twa score o' times —aye, an' twa score to the back o' that! And that's what for I am giein' ye this chance—a chance that ye will do weel to tak'!"

As he talked, the quiet-eyed, dull-faced man in the shabby black clothes went on methodically with his loading of the horse pistol. Then he was silent for a space. The Kid shivered and fidgeted. He wondered what was coming next. It is dreadful sometimes not to know what is coming. But thinking it over afterwards, he could not remember that he had been very frightened, which was still more strange —because he knew somehow that his father was mad. Everybody said he must have been, and the law—that great and wonderful thing which never errs—said so, too!

"It's this way, Kid," said the quiet man, "maybe ye do not mind what day it is the morn?"

"Aye," returned the Kid, readily, "it's Friday —for the housekeeper up at McGhie's hands me oot a piece an' a penny every Friday."

"I'll gie you a lickin', Alexander," cried his father, anger flashing from his eyes for the first time, "if ever I hear tell o' you frequentin' the back door o' sic a clan. The McGhies and their mansion house, indeed! I mind when his grandfaither ran a barrow up and doon a plank, when my faither was ridin' his hunter! I dare you, Alexander McGhie, to dishonour your ancestors. If ye do, I'll tak' the hide aff ye wi' a flail!"

The Kid was desirous of saying that the housekeeper at the mansion was not a McGhie, and that he received the dole at the front door, not the back. But a look at his father's face somehow stopped his tongue. After his sudden flash of temper David McGhie subsided into his old quiet.

"What I have to say to you is this," he said; "it's a chance I am willin' to tak'. This world is

no longer a place for me. Ye say that the morn's a Friday, and it is on that Friday that your mither will come back on us, out o' St. Cuthbert's Jail! But she will not find me—I hae a preference, and rather than face her I prefer to face an offended Maker."

With a movement of rude dignity he took off his battered hat, and his early gray hairs streamed out on the moderate wind.

"I am not an unreverent man, Kid," he continued, "and, mind you, if ye will not come with me this day the way I have chosen to tread, keep aye mind to be reverent in your heart."

"And what are you going to do?" asked the Kid, anxiously. "What way are you takkin' to get away frae HER?"

"This!" said the quiet man, tapping the pistol barrel, "just this!"

"But then I'll have no more daddy!" wailed the boy, suddenly breaking down.

"No more daddy," agreed the quiet man, "but then if you'll take my advice, you will not need one. It would be better than going back to her!"

Having finished, he lifted the pistol and clicked back the huge old-fashioned dogs.

"One for me," he said, "and one for you!"

At these words a wild and frantic terror filled all the Kid's heart. He wrenched himself clear of his father with a jerk, and turned a complete somersault among the leaves and underbrush. This conducted him by a series of bumps and leaps to the bed of a stream, where he lay shivering, but for the moment safe.

"I dinna want to die, daddy, I dinna want to die!" he cried out wildly.

"There is no need," said the quiet man, speaking from above; "that will leave two for me. But all the same, ye will live to rue it, Alexander!"

Before the Kid could rise from the slippery pebbles

in the bed of the burn he heard a curious scuffling sound as of a struggle, and then, sharp and distinct, like a thing apart, the noise of a shot.

. . . . .

The great doors of St. Cuthbert's Central Prison rolled slowly back like lock-gates turning. Sullen black walls rose up into the midheavens, making another night against the stars. It was twelve o'clock on Friday night, the first of May. In an hour or two all the young lads and lassies in the countryside would be rising out of their beds, and glancing out at the graying morn, so as to be well up the Kirk-town Fell when the sun rose. There they would wash their faces in dew and plight their troth, and very likely a couple or two would exchange an innocent kiss behind the thickest of the hedgerows coming home.

It was the first of May, and soon the things that were true and honest, pure, lovely, and of good report would be abroad, the virtue and the praise accompanying them. Also, *per contra*, Mag McGhie would be released from her full year of "time" served in the penitentiary of St. Cuthbert's. As usual, Mag's prison conduct had been such that not a day could be remitted. Rather, if such had been possible more would have been added thereto. And at her exit all that Christie Lawson, the head jailer, could say by way of Godspeed to Mag was, "I hope you'll be such a good subject of Her Majesty's that by the grace o' God we will never set eyes on the like of ye again!"

"Ye coffee-coloured lump o' sin," retorted his amiable prisoner, "I'd tak' to hoose-breakin', if it were only to come back and plague you, ye ill-set, sornin' barrel o' condemned militia pork!"

From this specimen, quite an average one, the reason why Mag received no consideration from her keepers is obvious. But all the same she complained

bitterly about favouritism. She came out at midnight into the blank dark with half a dozen others, sentenced along with her at the same sessions of justiciary and before the same red judge. One or two, including her own bosom crony, whose memory she now cursed, were not of this little band, now waiting so impatiently behind the barrier for liberation. Bouncing Bet Lock had gone before another tribunal, and Sam Seefer's case had also been called for final revision.

A few of the prisoners thanked one or other of their keepers. Sentiment was far from dead among these prison-stamped men and women. In some it assumed even abnormal proportions. One young lad wept to leave the cell where he had been tended, doctored, and fed. It was the only real home he had ever known. He "would die of consumption," he said. "He would never live through the winter."

"And the better for you, ye whimperin' rat!" cried Mag McGhie at the top of her voice, "ye have not the spunk even to blow your nose with another man's hanky!"

At which some of the liberationists laughed, but the prison discipline was still strong enough to prevent anything like general conversation. And, indeed, it was only an old and hardened offender like Mag who spoke at all. She cursed steadily—a kind of devil's paternoster of evil wishes and bitter reflections imprecated upon the heads of the whole prison staff, from the governor to the kitchen scullion. Mag McGhie concluded her orisons thus:

"And if that man o' mine is no waitin' wi' siller to buy me a drink an' a decent gown, faith, I'll slaughter him, the saft, useless, brosy sumph that he is!"

And Mag McGhie brought down her hand on the arm of her next neighbour with such violence that she cried out with the pain, and the sergeant of local police in charge of the "time expireds" was obliged to intervene.

It was a curious sensation when, out of the flaring naked gases of the prison corridor, the little band of the emancipated found themselves fronting the dark, while behind them the doors rumbled, shutting them out with the selfsame click that had shut them in.

The flare-lamp of a low lodging-house, a refuge of crimps and thieves, the worst in all St. Cuthbert's, dazzled the eyes of the ex-convicts. The hoarse voice of its proprietor, one Darby John deafened them, long accustomed to prison silences, where the warder's footfalls are the only friendly voices, and the swish of the sweeping besom the only audible "sighing of the prisoner."

"This way, brave boys, this way, fine lads all!" cried Darby John, a great hulk of a man with beetle brows, a blue-black hog-mane of hair, shaven jowl, and a voice like a cracked speaking trumpet.

"Here are the pots o' good liquor! Here are the comfortable beds, and if anyone hasn't got the dollar, why, hang me, if honest Darby John is the man to give them the worse welcome on account o' that!"

There were also in the crowd which waited one or two soft-voiced Sisters of Mercy, on the lookout for the women prisoners, a Salvation Army captain in her red-and-blue bonnet, looking chilly in the skimp clingsomeness of her official waterproof. The Society for the Employment of Prisoners, the Aid Society, and several others had workers on the spot. There was a young Presbyterian minister on the watch for an erring sheep, her mother's one ewe lamb; while in the background, a little retired from the others, the Catholic priest waited, weary but not dispirited, for the Tim and the Mick and the Pathrick who would presently issue forth. He was fresh to his district, and knew none of these parishioners at all, not even by name. But what matter? Father Macana knew that when he held up his hand and

spoke his sheep would know their shepherd's voice, if it were only by the soft Munster accent.

But Mag McGhie would have none of all these. She went through them like smoke, flinging her hoarse curses in the face of all who attempted to stop her.

"Out o' my sight! gawpin' dirt that ye are!" was her best word for the mission waiters.

"My man, the hound, the sneakin' hound, where is he?" she cried, "just let me see him! I'm the woman that will let daylight through his useless calf's carcass. Let me be at him with a decent bit o' timber, and I'll make a hole in his chump big enough for the poolies to drown themselves in!"

But there came no answer to the furious crying of the virago. The dumb night circled her about, deadening her words, making the oaths seem merely foolish. Shriek as she would, there was no response. At last the sergeant and two of his men who had been superintending the jail delivery, from the point of view of experts and (in the case of the sergeant) old acquaintances, moved Mad Mag on, still cursing and foaming at the mouth, because of the unaccountable absence of her husband—"that useless, brainless, thewless deil's buckie, Davie McGhie, with the backbone of a snail and the heart of Moses's own pig."

Of the threats she uttered there is no need to write further, nor yet of the language in which they were couched. Darby John, even he shrank before Mag's fame when her transports were upon her. For she would use a knife as soon as another her nails. And when angered, as to-night, it was reported on good authority that she was the equal of any two men, even if they were both of them Darby Johns.

He gave her a drink, however, with a shrewd eye to further custom, and presently the woman staggered away, dogged most persistently by a small, nimble, elusive, but inevitable shadow.

These two came to the town edge, passed into the woods, heard the river beneath softly talking to itself

down in the dark. All the way Mag clattered on, devising new tortures for the absent Davie, her husband. The small dodging shadow followed without sound, without drawing breath, always nearer and nearer. It was not far now to Kirkmessan. It could not be, for already the dawn was coming up out of the east. The pair had travelled far. Rare, chill, cold, with a single eyelash of fire where the light touched a flecked cloud immeasurably high, they saw before them the plain pearl-gray face of the dawn.

Mag raged as she recognised the huddle of white buildings. She shook her fist at the very church steeples. A haughty, unregenerate Gallio in slatternly garments, she cared for none of these things. She spat on the gateposts of the manses, threw dirt at the provost's windows, and was only persuaded away by a night policeman, who told her that she was wanted at "home"—that is, in the gabled, white-washed barrack in Back Mill Lands which still, in spite of loans and wadsetts, called the last of the McGhies its lord.

This policeman, Patrick Adair, a pitiful man where women were concerned, saw Mag safe to the entrance of Back Mill Lands. Farther than that he would not go, that is, not without Jock Higgs, his mate. Back Mill Lands was no place for a single man, nor, when he was married, for his wife.

It is to be noted that Mag, perhaps in compliment to Patrick Adair's good looks and condition of bachelorhood, cursed a shade less vehemently while under his care. She even made the semblance of a toilet by passing her fingers through the matted tangle about her brow, whose luxuriance prison discipline had not been able wholly to subdue.

But Back Mill Lands it was. There was the house. His house, the poltroon! He had never so much as lighted a fire. Very likely he would have nothing for her to eat—still more (and worse), nothing to drink! All her anger, half-evaporated, began to

return. She looked about for a weapon wherewith to enforce her entrance into her home. The forge of Tom Dinwiddie, the village smith, was at her right hand; Gregg the baker's at her left. In front of Gregg's stood his bread van, carefully dismantled, the shafts in the air. Nothing inside except a smell of yesterday's buns, and the last farinaceous sigh of many departed four-pound loaves. Nothing, at least, to suit Mad Mag in search of an argument.

But, on the other hand, Tom Dinwiddie, late at work repairing the wheel of the said bread van, had left his largest "spanner" lying on the ground, four pounds of good cold iron, and of a convenient shape to the hand. Mag took it up for the purposes of marital discussion, hefting it with satisfaction.

As she reached the door, the light of morning was looking in more clearly between the chimney pots of the Cross Keys, which opened on the square, and the squat smoke-blackened vent of Tom Dinwiddie's smithy.

Mag rattled violently at the door. Silence abode within. She called loudly, promised vengeances dire upon the miscreant David. Again she held out bribes. But the door remained shut. Rigorous silence maintained itself within. A sudden flash of fear, or something like it, ran through the woman's mind.

Could he have run away? No; she decided that he dared not. It was not in him. Run away, indeed, no! However fast and however far, well David McGhie knew that there was no city or parish so distant or so well hidden that he could abide safe from Mag Caigton's vengeance.

Heads began to appear from the scandalised houses surrounding Back Mill Lands—heads unkempt and middle-aged, heads old and white-mutched, heads young and curl-papered. In these parts the men

did not bother to put on their trousers for less than a fire.

"Oh, it's juist Mad Mag hame again!" said the women to the unseen questioners within, "she's the deil's ain brat! She will no be lang here. The poliss will soon have her by the wrists again for something. But in the meantime Guid peety David McGhie, honest man. He has a sair burden on his back!" "Aye, guidwife" (from one of the less censorious sex), "I ken weel that David buckled the burden on his back himsel'. But that makes it nane the easier to carry, *that I ken o'!*"

Finally tiring of her fruitless assaults on the flaked and peeling front door, Mag took her way round to the back, and there, turning the corner smartly, she was too quick for the small figure which had hitherto dogged her. She got him by the slack of his trousers—a pair of his father's, banded and furled without remaking, by a kindly neighbour—and haled him out for judgment and slaughter.

"Now, then," she demanded, "what's a' this aboot? Where's your faither, the dirty scoundrel?"

"He couldna come!"

"Couldna come—a likely story," shrieked the terror of Back Mill Lands; "he's hidin', mair likely. And what's mair, ye ken where he is!"

"Mither, he's deid! He killed himsel' wi' a pistol. He wanted to kill me. It was because ye were comin' hame. He thocht he had better!"

Mag McGhie lifted the spanner and struck—faithfully, as if he had been her husband instead of her son, a man instead of a child. The Kid fell prone, without a word. And in an hour Mag McGhie was celebrating her widowhood in the police cells, with the chance of hanging by the neck till she was dead, if the Kid did not recover. For from his window, too far away to interfere, Tom Dinwiddie, the smith, had seen the deed done, and knew the weapon that did it. Thereafter Mag flung the spanner into the

deepest pool in the Messan Water, regardless of the needs of justice, or the loss of an important "piece of conviction." And Tom Dinwiddie swore by his favourite forehammer that he would hang Mag himself if the bairn died.

CHAPTER II

PRINCIPALLY PAT

HIGH on a pleasant bank outside the town of Kirkmessan, on a choice site carefully selected to show the building to the best advantage, stood "Balmaghie," the beautiful castellated residence of P. Brydson McGhie, Esq., J.P.—otherwise, his house.

P. Brydson claimed to belong to the ancient and well-considered family of the McGhies, the feudal lords of Kirkmessan. And so he did. He further claimed to be THE McGhie, the head of the name. But here he erred grievously, as Davie of the Back Mill Lands would have had no difficulty in showing, if he had cared a ha'p'orth about the matter. However, he did not, having, as has been shown, something else upon his mind, which might well have occupied that of a stronger man.

Nevertheless, there were those in the town of Kirkmessan who did not forget. Genealogies were long remembered in that parish, especially if there was anything shady about them.

There was, for instance, little Archie Craw, the hunchback "writer," who (it is supposed) was engaged in compiling a history of the town. He had proceeded so far that he had reduced to writing all the malicious stories afloat about every family in the three streets —Main, King's, and High—not by any means excluding his own, with most of the members of which he was at variance, as became a country lawyer with a reputation for "good-going" pleas.

"Bitter Airchie" (he was always so called) could have told you, and indeed did tell everyone who cared to listen, and some who, being obliged to Archie, had to listen whether they liked it or not, how David of Back Mill Lands was the true and only original McGhie of McGhie and Kirkmessan, whose direct male ancestor had retour of the lands in 1585, when the Lords of the Congregation were distributing that which did not belong to them. Consequently the succession of these valuable estates, together with the rightful title of "*The* McGhie," descended to the son of the aforesaid David, otherwise Alexander the Kid, the hero of this story.

Now at this point comes in a warning. If any far-sighted reader, glinting a knowing eye onward to the last chapter in the expectation of great inheritance, thinks to find the Kid a knight of the shire and strong on the game laws, that reader is in the way of disappointment. Save in the matter of barren honour, the Kid's ancient descent never did him the least good.

"Aye," said Bitter Little Airchie, the writer of Kirkmessan, sinking his head deep between his shoulders like a stork in a shower, "aye, auld Paitrick up yonder has bravely feathered his nest, as ye see. They tell me they can make something they caa 'alumeenium' oot o' plain burnside clay. Weel, that auld sinner has made minted gowd oot o' gye queer dirt. Awhile at the 'pack' and siller made oot o' that—awhile at the money lendin' (on the strict Q.T. as the sang says), and piles and barrow-loads o' money made oot o' that! Then contractin' on a lairge scale, a braw white waistcoat, a gowd chain as thick as your wrist, then the bench o' justices, and word sent on ahead to St. Peter at the Muckle White Yett to keep a reserved seat for P. Brydson McGhie, Esq., of Balmaghie!"

Now take away the spite in which the tongue of Bitter Little Airchie Craw lived and waggled like

a screw in water, and there remains no very unjust or incomplete sketch of the life of Patrick Brydson McGhie, the fortunate member of a younger branch which had thus redeemed the fortunes of his ancient fallen house.

"But," continued the bitter one, "I forgot the family. There's the mistress—she's a fine adjunct to the carriage and pair. I canna say mair nor better aboot her than that. When ye see the bonny spankers, chestnut and yella leather, come clippin' it up the High, and the landau (or is it a baroosh ?) fresh frae Penman's yaird—a' chocolate and broon, lined wi' fine strokes o' scarlet dune wi' Crombie's ain hand ! Oh, it's braw—Lord, sirce, but the carriage is braw ! But what wad it be withoot Mrs. Brydson P. McGhie, set up there a' to match wi' broon sable fur, and boas and constrictors, and muffs an' puffs, a' broon and chocolate, and nocht crimson aboot her except maybe the point o' her nose, gin it be a cauld day !

"Speak ? No ; what for should she speak ? Doth an image, graven by airt an' man's device, speak ? Doth a mantelpiece ornament engage in conversation on the land laws and the price o' snuff ? Go to, Bailie. Ye ask ower muckle. Mistress P. Brydson is a credit to oor toon o' Kirkmessan, and that I will maintain ! "

But not even Bitter Little Airchie had a word to say against the young folks who were growing up in the great, expensive, natural-wood-fitted mansion of "Balmaghie." The turned commas must not be forgotten. They are the hall mark of the suburban house with pretensions, and in this case they prevented the cruel disgrace of the residence of P. Brydson McGhie being vulgarly numbered 107, High Street, which, according to the Burgh Extension Act, it should have been, if Mr. P. B. McGhie had not been a large ratepayer.

Great, however, as he was without, P. Brydson, even as a justice of the peace, was a failure indoors.

His wife told him when she wanted more money, but otherwise was perfectly contented not to see his face for ten minutes in the day—outside, that is, of meal times.

His sons were mostly away at school and college, and when at home, squandered treasures of ingenuity in avoiding "the pater," which would have placed them high in any examination, oral or written.

That Patrick Brydson had three daughters need be no sort of a surprise to anyone. He was just the kind of bulgy, comfortable, arm-chairy man who would be sure to have three daughters, and to be so proud of the fact as to be completely ruled by them—all the time, mark you, declaiming strongly as to the necessity of the head of a house keeping his family in order, inculcating respect for authority, putting the young in their places, and, in general, upholding obedience, subordination, and the eternal laws.

"Eternal B-O-S-H!" exclaimed Patricia McGhie, the second in age of the daughters, somewhat disrespectfully, as her father, after delivering an address with his coat tails parted before the fire, went out, slamming the door behind him.

"Patricia," cried Marthe, the eldest of the three (she was full twenty), "you must *not* speak that way of your father. I forbid it!"

Pat McGhie arranged herself before the fire, pretended to blow her nose indignantly on an altogether invisible handkerchief, and, having thrust a pair of thumbs into equally imperceptible waistcoat pockets, she drummed "Peter-Dick-Pot-Stick" with her fingers upon her blouse. Atalanta laughed at her sister's boldness.

"I will not have it!" repeated Marthe, stamping her little foot.

"Save us! Have they made you a J.P. too, Marthe?" cried Pat, playing with the big maps, which rolled and unrolled out of a sort of wooden

"hidie hole" arranged under the cornice. The girls were in the schoolroom. For it was Saturday morning, and according to the laws of Balmaghie (which, like stupid people's opinions, never altered) the two housemaids were "doing" the girls' own little sitting room. It was owing to this that they had come across their father, and had received a lecture on the danger of making and cultivating undesirable acquaintances.

"All very well," commented Patricia, after her father had gone out, and the sound of his heels had done tap-tapping on the black-and-white tiles of the hall, "all *very* well! We are not to know Jim This, because his father is a farmer, and can be seen in the mart on Mondays, bidding for hoggets and yearlings. We mustn't know Tom That, because *his* father once kept an hotel. Or let the minister come too often, because he has only two hundred a year, and all minister's wives have——"

"Hush, will you?" said Marthe, blushing. "If father thinks that he needs to speak to us about such things, it's no business of yours!"

"No," retorted Patricia, making a little mouth at her sister, "perhaps not. At least the minister is not. But the cap is perhaps a little too near our dear Marthe's size. That was a long talk we had with Mr. Symington all alone on prayer-meeting night. Interesting little sinner! Pretty too! Faithful pastor! What was he saying all the time, I wonder?"

"That is none of your business, miss!" said her elder sister, a little tartly for her.

"Ah, hum, of course not," said Patricia the irrepressible, "*of* course not! Secret of the confessional, and all that—we understand, eh, Atalanta?"

"We understand!" echoed Atalanta, smiling, glad to be included.

Martha, Marta, Marthe, the eldest of the three girls, turned on her youngest sister.

"Perhaps Patricia, who is old enough to know how to behave herself, can *say* what she likes," she said, rapping the words out smartly, "but you, Atalanta, make a great mistake if you think *you* can do so. Go to your practising this instant, and don't let me see you lift your head for an hour. Or, if you don't, I'll get you sent back to be dragonised for another year at Madame Faber's. You know I can easily persuade the mater, and what *she* says, the pater will do. He thinks three girls in the house too many as it is!"

"Well," said Pat the freebooter, whose speech was always unfettered, "you, Marthe, are going the right way about it to leave only two. Bless you, my children!"

As she spoke she extended a hand high over her elder sister's head. Marthe McGhie was a little brown-skinned girl with the red of health and good humour glowing in cheeks which reminded you constantly of some ripe and wholesome fruit. On this occasion she turned away without deigning an answer. But she kept her eye on Atalanta, who did not venture to dispute her authority, but took herself off in the direction of the music room, her lips muttering darkly what seemed to be variations upon the theme of "Ha-ha, a day will come!"

The three McGhie girls were considered "very different," though, by general consent, all were eminently "nice" girls—good friends to make, good housekeepers, clever at many things, and with a most notable faculty of "getting on with people," which their parents lacked in a quite extraordinary degree.

The Marthe the town knew was a little, bright, dusky thing, with red lips that were often tightly compressed—a paragon of district visitors, interested in all church work, a prop of meetings, societies, and Dorcas cuttings-out. She was reported to make her own clothes, so as to give away the equivalent

portion of her allowance. But at any rate, if she did, her appearance never betrayed it. Marthe was always perfectly dressed. Even her enemies, such as she had, allowed that much. Bright, kind, busy-bee little Marthe, it did one good to meet you in the street, and the light in the brown eyes and the kindness about the quietly smiling mouth, did many a man besides the minister good as he took off his hat to the quick, trim figure on her daily rounds.

If the collected male youth of Kirkmessan had been assembled and the sentiment given (they were great on "sentiments" in Kirkmessan) as it used to be at the old Christmas and Hogmanay parties long ago—"Kneel to the prettiest, bow to the wittiest, and kiss the girl you like best"—it is certain that little Marthe would have found herself saluted copiously even to embarrassment. Very popular was the little, dimpled brown thing. She might not exactly be all you wanted as your sweetheart, but she was just the very girl, down to the ultimate hair, in whom you wanted to confide *about* your sweetheart.

"She's too attractive to be an auld maid," said Bitter Little Airchie Craw, who melted at the sight or even the thought of Marthe; "but, oh, if it had been the will of Providence, what an auld maid she wad hae made—far oot o' the common. She wad hae sweetened half the town!"

And the little bitter one thought with a sudden gravity of an only sister, who had sweetened the greater part of his own lonely life—now, alas! growing acrid again because she had been laid away under the sod.

Concerning Patricia McGhie opinions varied. According to common report, she had a tongue capable upon occasion of "clipping clouts." She had even worsted Bitter Airchie himself, "writer" as he was, and great wit as he set up to be, in a battle of words. For the average young man of Kirkmessan and the

neighbourhood, Pat McGhie was altogether too clever. There was something in her eye, a laughing twinkle of light (like a far-away lighthouse at night), which suggested that the young lady did not regard you too seriously. This proved disconcerting to the rural mind, and even town men of eminence had been discouraged thereby.

Patricia was tall, but not too tall, for the rest dark, lithe, and holding herself like a trained gymnast. She usually had a dog following her, sometimes two, and when she wanted them she set a couple of fingers to her mouth, and whistled like a shepherd on the hills. This was considered to unfit her for all respectable society in Kirkmessan. But some thought otherwise.

Atalanta was only seventeen ("going eighteen" as she put it) and as "pretty as a picture," or rather as a Christmas card of the old-fashioned sort. She had blue eyes, placed a little wide, fair hair that crisped and curled rebelliously, a straight nose, and as Gilbert McGhie said, with a brother's lack of enthusiasm, she "promised to be not bad-looking when once she had shaken herself together." But since this Gilbert, then at College, was growing in lumps and annexes almost from day to day, *he* need not have talked, as Patricia immediately and very clearly pointed out.

Atalanta also was tall, and carried her head as if she were proud of it, as indeed, in the opinion of many (even of her own sex), she had a good right to be. That she was not so wise and sedate as Marthe, nor so clever as Pat, was held to be no detriment. She was certainly pretty beyond prettiness. And is that not the whole duty of the third of three sisters, ever since all the romancers were young?

Altogether, there was not a trio of young women like them in the parish, and in the public regard they redeemed even the "pit from which they were digged," as Bitter Airchie called their immediate parentage.

As for their brothers, Gilbert was a nice lad. Tom was a nice laddie. Peter was a nice boy—only Bob (next to Gilbert) was a "deil," and in his own person revived all the family disgrace. Bitter Airchie sometimes said that this was a relief to him when he looked at the girls and thought of P. Brydson.

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Restored to their own sitting room, the three girls occupied themselves variously. Busy-bee little Marthe cut out blouses for her next sale of work. Blouses, she found, sell best—at least, where, as at Kirkmessan, there are many young women among the buying population. Miraculously poised upon the backs of two chairs with her feet upon the window sill, Patricia alternately dipped into the sixth volume of Froude's "History of England" and criticised her sister's work, till, with more than her natural vivacity, Marthe invited her lazy sister to take the scissors and "do it herself."

Baby Lant—Atalanta's earliest attempt at her own pretentious name—lay back on the sofa, at ease among the pillows, content, first of all, that she was not at school; secondly, that she had not to practise; determined (thirdly) not to read; subtly conscious, too, of the pleasant reflection which the big mirror with the water lilies painted over it sent back to her. She was not anxious for any occupation. In the meantime she polished her pretty pink nails into super-immaculateness by means of a nail file, some ooo emery paper stolen from her brother Gilbert's workroom, and a natural emollient applied by the tongue, and rubbed up with a handkerchief, which she had abstracted for the purpose from her sister Marthe's pocket as she passed, absorbed in her "cutting out."

The morning room at Balmaghie—that eligible suburban residence can now do without its indicative turned commas, which have served their purpose—

was a pleasant room looking over at the spires of the churches, and the green and purple slate roofs of the houses of Kirkmessan.

In the intervals of prettily but most improperly biting and polishing her nails, Baby Lant counted the steeples. She was not strong in arithmetic, and often was not sure whether there were five or six. But she always knew that which belonged to the Free Martyr's Kirk, being that presently ministered to by the Rev. William Heath Symington, the effective cause of the recent lecture delivered to such heedless listeners in the schoolroom of Balmaghie.

Baby Lant was not in love—not the least in the world. She had never been in love. But she knew it would come—at least, that she would have the "horrid fag," as Pat called it, of having people in love with you! This was all very well for Patricia, who was always ready to snap anybody's head off. But for herself, that is, Baby Lant—with two big blue eyes abrim with dreams, she took great interest in the thought that she would have people in love with her.

For the present, however, Patricia being publicly disdainful, and no man having appeared on the horizon with the necessary courage to attack *her*, Baby Lant watched over her eldest sister like a mother, and invented romances in that curly head of hers about Marthe, Mr. Symington, the little ivy-covered manse on the Messan Brae, with all the devotion of a trained yarn spinner who lets his puppets trot round his head while he himself lies adreaming.

Hark to these three! It is a pleasant sort of eavesdropping:

"Say, Marthe," said Patricia, with a malicious twinkle and a pretty bird-like turn of the head characteristic of her, "when *he* comes past the gate now, especially if he chances to look up, we must all fall flat on our faces, mustn't we, or better still, turn and run as hard as we can?"

"I wish you would not be so silly!" said her sister, with as much dignity as can go along with four pins and a basting needle all in one's mouth at a time.

"Silly!" cried Patricia, mockingly, "never in the world! Wisdom itself is centred in me, sister mine. And that you will see—before you dig your first crop of potatoes out of the manse garden! I recommend 'Early Roses'!"

"I can't think how you can be so cruel!" said Marthe; "you know you spoil everything when you talk like that!"

"What is 'everything'?" demanded Patricia, immediately pouncing upon this as an admission.

"Oh, *you* know," said Marthe, keeping her eyes very firmly on her work; "you know as well as I do—about Mr. Symington, and all that nonsense, and father's not wanting me encourage him. As if I would encourage anyone!"

"I should!" said Baby Lant, sucking her thumb as if it were made of chocolate, "just to see what he would do!"

"That would be cruel and very wicked also!" said Marthe, sententiously, "as you will know when you grow up, Baby Lant!"

"You hear, Baby Lant," smiled Patricia, "*when* you grow up. Marthe scores one! Put away childish things—feeding bottles and such-like, Baby Lant!"

"Well, anyway," cried Baby Lant, making an end of her nails for the present, and actually troubling to raise herself on one elbow, "I am kinder than you, Pat, if I *am* only going eighteen and not yet grown up! At least I am willing to help Marthe, and not just laugh and hinder! So there!"

"Now that's what Baby Lant (eighteen and not grown up) considers sensible. Yet there are people who would give girls a vote!" said Patricia, languidly.

" Why, Baby, I would do more to help in half an hour —could and would both—if I thought that father was in earnest with his silly talk, or Marthe there cared a button-without-the-stalk for Mr. Symington, than you in a lifetime. You are a cozy, comfortable person enough, Baby, and will be pleasant to live with. But they don't make a pretty sofa cushion garnished with eyes behind and before, like the beasts in the Bible ! "

Baby Lant sulked a little, but only answered, " Well, you take a strange way to show your kindness to Marthe, always mocking at her. You're worse than the horridest girl at school ! "

" Then you've had a happy school life, Baby," said Patricia, turning the leaves of her book abstractedly, and then patting her mouth to emphasize a yawn. " When the time comes, dear Babe, we three will hang together like crabs in a basket. But in the meantime while Marthe doesn't know whether she likes him or not, and he hasn't made up his mind whether he likes her——"

" Why, of course he does," cried Atalanta, with a sudden burst of indignation ; " anybody could tell that ! You should have heard him at our old Cook Marion's wedding—why, when Mr. Symington read out all that about the happiness of the married state, and the crown of happy, peaceful years, he was thinking all the time about our Marthe ! I could tell by his voice. Besides, he kept looking over where she was ! "

" It was at me he looked, Baby Lant," said Patricia, in a matter-of-fact tone ; " I had the ring, you know. He told me to have it ready on my little finger, as Cook Marion's husband would never be able to find it at the proper moment. It was a secret between us. Besides, I'm not sure but that he likes me best, anyway ! "

Baby Lant was on her feet in a flash, white hot with indignation.

"Oh, you story!" she cried, "how can you, Patricia McGhie? If you were to be taken this moment, what would you say?"

"Say?" murmured Patricia, without troubling to turn her head; "I should say,

> 'Good-by, proud world, I'm going home,
> I'm not thy friend and thou'rt not mine!'"

"Don't be wicked, Pat," said Marthe, stirred for the first time at the abuse of sacred-sounding words.

Patricia waved a slender white hand in a tired way over her two sisters and rearranged herself on her chair backs.

"There you go," she said, "all you good folk are alike—you never take the trouble to think. The man who wrote that (Emerson, his name was) only meant that he was tired of living in the city and that he was going back to the country."

"Well, it doesn't *sound* like that!" said Marthe and Atalanta together, a little taken aback, however.

"Ah, yes, you go by sound, you people," said Patricia, indulgently; "pray by sound; sing by sound in church the same words you sang as a child, and you like them because of that. But the meaning—that's quite another thing. But what am I saying? Girls should not presume to think. They should listen with folded hands to their parents and guardians till they get married. And after that—why, have they not husbands to think for them?"

Marthe did not answer this. She knew better. She only came across and laid her cool brown cheek against Patricia's. Then she kissed her softly.

"Dear old Marthe!" said Patricia, suddenly reaching up a hand and catching her sister round the back of her neck, "I *am* a wretch. You are a hundred times better than I, and far too good for anybody in this wicked world—even (she added maliciously) *for Willie!*"

And before her sister could recover, she alighted from her chair backs as easily and as daintily as a bird descends from a perch.

"Here endeth the first lesson!" she said, and marched out of the parlour with a mischievous assumption of ecclesiastical port, holding up her dress like a Geneva gown.

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CHAPTER III

MORE PAT

The rear portions of Back Mill Lands looked toward the red freestone walls, the many windows, and glittering conservatories of Balmaghie. And that, for many years, was all the connection, except on Fridays, that had existed between the elder and the younger branches of the clan McGhie.

But it was left to the Kid—otherwise Alexander McGhie, son of David—to make the first real friendly advances. He made them by falling across the path between the little shrubbery and the house, with an ugly wound on his head. He lay there, still as the dead, till Patricia came along. The young lady was whistling "Ye Banks an' Braes o' Bonnie Doon," and inquiring with the born whistler's exaggeration of feeling why they bloomed so fresh and fair, when her eye caught the sordid heap of rags and tatters lying face down on the clean white gravel of the walk, where the Kid, creeping from Dinwiddie's cot, whither he had been carried, had fallen a second time in his wild flight from Mad Mag.

In general Patricia knew no particular reason why she should be afraid of anything. And indeed she wasn't—except perhaps of a few of the larger carnivora, like mice and tigers. So she turned over the Kid, started a little at the drawn white face streaked with blood, and at last found the dreadful matted place, dark with clotted crimson, which Mad Mag had made with a single application of Tom Dinwiddie's "spanner."

Patricia was practical—also, considering her slim figure, strong. The firm pressure of lip on lip and

the look of the dark aquamarine eyes, which could flash out straight as a thrust at the rapier play when she would, in spite of the languid amusement in them at most times, told of latent determination.

Generally she left action to others, but sometimes, when there was no one to tease or to do her will, she acted like a leader of armies. So now Pat McGhie glanced just twice about her, once to either side. She did not need to look behind. She had just come that way. Then turning up her skirt, so as not to soil her dress, she lifted the Kid in her arms, and conveyed him to the little summer pavilion, called the garden house, where the girls often sat and talked over their work or pretended to read on summer mornings.

Indeed Marthe's "housewife" was lying there at the moment when Patricia laid her burden down on the bench. She pushed a hassock beneath the Kid's head, and ran to the back door for a basin and a sponge. But she did not confide in Mistress Carter, the fat cook, nor yet in Teena, the second housemaid, who ran at the word to get Miss Patricia what she wanted.

She was back again in a moment without anyone having followed her. She wished for Marthe. But Marthe had gone to town to do her district visiting. A small stranger had arrived from a far country, somewhat unexpectedly, to the address of Mrs. "Coaly" Sogie, the sweep's improvident wife, and Marthe was taking the newcomer some of the comforts of home in the shape of bed wrappings and body linen. His departure had been so sudden that he had not had time, apparently, to pack his trunk. At least, if report were to be credited, he had arrived in Jock's Row, Kirkmessan, with practically nothing upon him at all. Marthe could not endure cases of destitution, and as Mrs. "Coaly" Sweep was a most shiftless person, in whom she had no manner of confidence, Marthe, neat and practical from head to foot, felt

a responsibility fall upon her, to see that the youthful stranger should not suffer for his over-confidence.

Her sister Patricia, therefore, panting over the Kid in the garden house on the hill, knew that what she had to do, she must do quickly and alone. To call Baby Lant never so much as crossed her mind, though she was within hail. *She* would only shriek and faint at the sight of blood. Then she, Patricia, would have two of them on her hands. No, thank you!

Wherein, as many sisters do, she wronged Baby Lant. Her time had not come, that was all. After a while she wore the cap and wristbands of the trained nurse with as much *aplomb* as any of them.

Clip-clip went the scissors out of Marthe's big, figured brocade bag. They were cutting away the Kid's matted hair. Then followed a pause. The Kid moaned as the sponge passed lightly over the bared place. It was terrible to see, but Pat McGhie had doctored dogs before. There was, for instance, her own fox terrier, when it was run over by an engine, and not expected to live. The gamekeeper had suggested putting a shot through it, but Patricia had brought it round, and Vixen now ran about as impudently as ever on three good legs, and sometimes forgot at which corner the lame one was—a triumph for the lady surgeon, her mistress.

There was no awkwardness or hesitation in the hand that laid bare and dressed the Kid's wound in the garden house, yet all the time Patricia was perplexed in mind.

"What shall I do with him after?" she was asking herself. And so far she found no answer. If her father knew, he would order George, the coachman, to take the Kid to the combination poorhouse which was his panacea for all problems of the poor whenever they touched him nearly. He paid his rates? Indisputable! Very well then, he paid the local authority to look after such cases. Why then should he do

it himself? It was merely paying twice for the same article. And he, P. Brydson McGhie, of Balmaghie, prided himself on never paying his just debts more than once. He kept the receipts for three years. This logic was unanswerable.

Patricia did not try to answer it. She simply counted her father in among the strong, stupid things, such as fate, the government, the confession of faith, a cow, and the smallpox, which were not meant to be argued with, but simply evaded at any cost.

Now it was nowise difficult for Patricia to evade her father. He always moved to the sound of a trumpet, as she herself observed.

But the little garden house had been constructed originally of two parts, an inner, small and dark, where many diseased and surgically imperfect toys had been stowed away, some dating from the time of Baby Lant—dolls, tailless monkeys, and cooking batteries—others, and these the more numerous, belonging to the boys, to Gilbert, Rob, Tom. These, for the most part, were hopelessly broken bats, half-finished models of ships, burst footballs—all stored on the well-known principle that if you keep a thing for seven years some one will find a use for it.

Pat McGhie had all these things out at the door in ten minutes, while her patient was coming to. Then she annexed Housemaid Teena's leaves (tea), scattered them over the floor, swept them out carefully, tucked her skirt up to her waist, and before you could say Jack Robinson (if so you wished to do) Pat was on her knees scrubbing out the little dark apartment in the rear of the garden house. It had a dim skylight in its pent-house roof which Patricia cleaned and set wide to let in the air. Then —oh, happiness! she heard the sound of Marthe's blessed feet, pit-patting on the gravel walk. Pat was sure she would never make fun of Marthe any more—never—never! Good Marthe!

She ran out and intercepted her sister on the plain white glare of the avenue, swept that very morning clear of leaves and rubbish. Marthe, smart and dimpling as usual, brown hatted, brown gloved, brown gowned (tailor made), brown booted—a daintier person not to be met with within a radius of fifty miles,—stared at her sister in astonishment.

"Why, Pat," she cried, "what have you been doing with yourself? You look a spectacle—a pair of spectacles—a whole consignment of spectacles! What would Mr. Syming——"

"Tut," cried Patricia, catching her sister about the waist, and rushing her toward the shrubbery, "come here. Never mind what anyone would say. I *am* a sight, I know, but I want you!"

"At least put down your skirt, Patricia McGhie," cried her sister, for once submitting to be dragged aside from the straight path; "it's not decent to run about like a child of ten! I shouldn't allow Baby Lant——"

"You'll see! You'll see!" panted Patricia. "Oh, Marthe, I am so glad you have come. You will help——"

"Help?" said her sister, "help who—what? Have you gone crazy, girl?"

"With bedding him down," cried Pat, hastening their march by running on in front; "quick—he may die."

And in this fashion Marthe McGhie, eldest of the race of Patrick Brydson McGhie, was for the first time introduced to her distant cousin, the Kid, undoubted head of her feudal house.

She looked at him a moment as he lay extended, his cheek on his bent arm. Marthe examined her sister's hasty dressing with a professional eye.

"Yes—all right—" she said, "not so bad, Pat. Where did you learn that?"

"It was only from doing Vixen when she got run over!" said Patricia, modestly, as she put a cup of

water to the patient's lips. The patient thrust it away, with a muttered word which startled his two nurses. They looked at each other, awed.

"Poor boy," said Patricia, "he does not know what he is saying."

But still, after that the girls had a clearer sense of what they were attempting and their courage rose with the difficulty.

"Very likely he has never heard anything else where he comes from!" said Marthe.

"Is he—does he remind you of anybody?" said Patricia, "anybody you know very well?"

Marthe studied the small distinct features of the boy as he lay muttering on the bench of the garden house.

Suddenly she clapped her hands, still daintily gloved. "I declare," she cried, "he is like Brother Bob when he is asleep!"

Patricia nodded and bent an attentive ear.

"Listen," she said, "he is saying something."

Both girls listened intently to the faint telephonic tones.

"*I'm wee Kid McGhie—I'm wee Kid McGhie* (the impersonal voice said),

> "My faither killed himsel'
> An' my mither killed me!"

Over and over he said it, like the burden of a song. The stroke of Tom Dinwiddie's spanner had somehow struck out in that small brain the faint semblance of a rhyme.

> "I'm wee Kid McGhie—I'm wee Kid McGhie!
> My faither killed himsel'
> An' my mither killed me!"

"He is mentioning our name—perhaps he knows where he is," said Patricia.

But Marthe, more skilled in the ill-doing families of Kirkmessan, and the scandal of Back Mill Lands, shook her head.

"He will be Mad Mag's boy, the son of David McGhie. She is a terrible woman."

Then a sudden resolution took her.

"Stay here, Pat," she said. "Wait till I can fall into my working things. We must get the key of the old box-room and stow away all this rubbish. It won't do to destroy it, or there will be questions asked. Then we must speak to King, or he and the boy will come poking round!"

King was gardener, trusted and faithful, to P. Brydson McGhie, Esq., J.P. But as a matter of private enterprise, he did what the young misses told him, and was none the poorer thereby.

So leaving Patricia on guard, Marthe departed. She was always a kind of household providence. And it created no surprise when with the assistance of Boy King she was seen hauling about the mattress of one of her brothers' discarded beds for purposes unknown. Had Pat been observed thus employed, or Baby Lant, every woman in the place would have become a trained detective on the spot.

But Marthe was different. She was always "conveying" something out of the house, generally by hidden ways, for the benefit of her poor—or Mr. Symington's poor, which was the same thing.

So her operations excited no surprise, as she went about, squaring King, engaging Boy King to labour at the oar, carry messages, tend the sick, stay awake at nights, go for the doctor (a young, unmarried doctor, with feelings easily accessible), and generally to act the elfin messenger who

> "When he cam to wan water,
> He doffed his cap and swam;
> And when he cam to broken brig,
> He bent his bow and sprang."

Boy King knew McGhie's Kid. He had often stoned him, in fact, and now did not quite see what all the fuss was about. Still, there was his father to reckon with, and "the young leddies" were not ungenerous. So Boy King, being promised a new catapult, was silent as the grave.

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It could not be said that at first the Kid was effusive in his gratitude towards his preservers. Indeed it was with the greatest difficulty that he could be kept on his shake-down, scientifically arranged by Dr. Albert Edward Dalrymple, M.B., C.M., who showed himself remarkably anxious to share a watch with Miss Patricia, so that he might take counsel with her concerning the treatment to be pursued.

Indeed, Dr. Dalrymple incurred some very unjust suspicions which he bore with manly fortitude. For Mr. P. Brydson McGhie met him in the avenue one day, and after regarding him with extreme surprise over the bulge of his white waistcoat, asked him plump and plain what he came there for.

Fortunately, Dalrymple, with wits sharpened by contact with Patricia (even though he had not had as much of that as he could have desired), remembered that gardener King had mentioned to him that he was suffering from rheumatism in his feet. So on the spot he extemporised a going concern in the way of treatment. He resolved to inject cocaine on both sides of the joint. He thought up what he knew about Pott's Fracture, from which King had once suffered, and, without actual pause, answered the proprietor of the policies of Balmaghie, that he was in attendance on his gardener King for rheumatism of the ankles, aggravated by former lesion, resulting from fracture of the smaller bone and dislocation of the larger.

"Old fool, he's malingering again," retorted Mr. P. Brydson McGhie, sympathetically. "Mind you,

Dalrymple, you can doctor him all you want to, but don't look to me for payment. Patrick McGhie is nothing if not frank. He says what he means. Nothing like having a clear understanding from the beginning ! "

The doctor said that he quite agreed with Patrick McGhie, and that, of course, King and he would settle the matter of fees between them.

" Well, you're a fool, Dalrymple," said the white waistcoat with the man inside. " I think I ought to know King. You'll never see a penny of your money. You are only losing your time. However, you can't say but what I have warned you. I am not the sort of man to let another man make a fool of himself without telling him so ! "

And this feature of his character gained for P. Brydson McGhie more enemies than all his other peculiarities put together. People don't want to be told that they are fools. They may know it, but they are not grateful for being told that other people see it.

Dr. Dalrymple went on into the garden, and, bidding the astonished King take off his boots and stockings on the spot, informed him that he was to be treated for rheumatism in both ankles !

" But can't we just *say* it ? " ejaculated the alarmed man, tugging at his boot laces, and not tranquilised by the glint of a silver wire at the end of an injection syringe ; " that would do just as well."

" It might for you," said the doctor, firmly, " but it won't for me. Hang it, what a fellow has to say and do for a parcel of girls ! "

And he hummed to himself certain lines—none truer in the language—which he had learned in his remotest childhood :

> " Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
> When first we practise to deceive ! "

While he was inserting the needle into King's ankle, who puffed and snorted as if he were going to get both legs cut off, the doctor burst out suddenly, and without apparent connection, "Oh, CONfound all girls!"

This cured King for the moment, who felt a sudden access of *esprit de corps*.

"If ye are meanin' our young leddies," he said, "I will thank you to take back thae words!"

"With pleasure," said Dr. Dalrymple, sending the needle more viciously into a new spot; "please keep still, King. Wriggling like that is very bad for the treatment."

. . . . .

When the Kid came to himself in the little cubby-hole at the back of the garden house, in that retired spot on the limited policies of Balmaghie, he was far from happy. Yet he ought to have been. All rules and standards pointed this out to him. He had everything he could wish for—better bedding than he had ever lain upon, the two prettiest girls in Kirkmessan to wait on him hand and foot—at least two of the three prettiest. Boy King was there to do the coarser tendings. He had good food, nourishing soups, the doctor to talk with him and get his head into shape again. Happy—he ought to have been in the seventh heaven! Only he wasn't. The Kid wanted to see what had become of his mother. He wanted to go to her!

Mysterious ties and promptings of blood—faint, restless quiverings of something within him which might have been conscience, and might have been only a kind of Marconi code pulsing in some secret receiver where was concealed the Kid's rudimentary —soul—these bade him go and seek his mother.

Mad Mag McGhie! She had stricken him almost to death in blind fury. Yes, that was right. The doctor man meant kindly in offering him a chance

as "buttons." Marthe hinted at an additional gardener boy required by King. They were all very kind. But his mother—she might kill him, *but*—she was his mother. And she had no one now. He was her Kid, now that his father was gone.

This being so, it was no great wonder that one morning King's Boy came into the girls' sitting-room and signalled mysteriously to Marthe and Pat. Baby Lant thought it had something to do with planting strawberry shoots or the grafting of roses. Marthe and Pat were so funny, when they might lie still and let their hair grow. Always rushing about, so silly! And now Pat was getting worse than Marthe. Well, they couldn't *both* have him. "Him" meant a quite innocent man, the Rev. William Heath Symington, of the Free Martyrs' Church in Kirkmessan.

"He's gane, the bird's flown!" whispered Boy King, when the girls came and stood out of hearing of the house at the edge of the shrubbery. "The bed's cauld! He maun hae run awa' yestreen!"

Inspection confirmed this. The Kid was certainly gone. And everybody, with one exception, exclaimed at the boy's rank ingratitude. But what could you expect? That class of boy is always restless, thankless, untrustworthy.

The exception was not Marthe, as one would have expected, but Patricia. Faint and far away some community of blood stirred in her. Perhaps she, too, was a kid of the goats. She felt that the boy had gone to his own. And so—whatever might come of it, whatever of steady work and respectable position he had cast behind him, there was a certain elemental rightness in the thing he had done.

But this Patricia kept to herself. She handed over the bedding used by McGhie's Kid to them who buy and sell, asking no price, but only the promptest removal. With a sigh she put back the *débris* of dolls and cricket bats and damaged ironclads, till the

black hole of the garden house became again what it had been, and the door was shut.

The Kid faded from the memory of all but Patricia, who had found him, and King's Boy, who had been done out of a big fight he had planned behind the harness room. These two mourned in secret for Kid McGhie, and were not comforted.

CHAPTER IV

THE "KNIFER"

HAGMAN'S Close, North Pleasance, in the city of Edinburgh, occupied one of the oldest and most unreformed situations of that still ancient and unreformed town. It was called by its present highly honourable name owing to the fact that formerly it had contained the official residence of the city headsman, the blade and "hag clog" of whose profession were still to be traced over the low door of the tall, old, grimy "land."

There are few "lands" like that in Edinburgh now—that is, of the older sort. Thirty years ago, however, they were the rule. And, as the number of those who know what an actual old-time "land" was, is growing steadily fewer, I will try to sketch this towering rabbit warren in a few sentences.

A cliff-like face of grimy gray stone, broken by rows upon rows of small windows with small panes, many of them broken, stuffed with rags, and mended with paper. Seven and eight stories the rule, ten and eleven the exception. Four families, sometimes eight, on each landing. These landings lit by day through one narrow arrow slit in the tower of the turnpike stair—by night not lit at all. Thirty to sixty families in all, exclusive of lodgers and casuals, lived in that grimy barrack, all going to and fro upon their occasions up and down that winding staircase, indescribable in its filth. A faint, keen odour of packed humanity grew more and more insupportable as you mounted higher, which you did, holding on to a greasy rope stanchioned to the wall. Children swarmed under-

foot at all stages of the ascent, and it was a constant miracle how more of them did not tumble over, and so achieve (what was the best thing for them) Nirvana at the earliest age possible.

Some did, and were happy ever after. The others survived and were both sorry for it themselves and made others sorry also.

Such was a "land"—the outside of it, that is, before you entered the separate dwellings of which this vast human warren was composed.

It was a curious life for a country-bred boy. The Kid's mother, erstwhile Mag McGhie, had on her arrival in town, promptly remarried with a certain "Knifer" Jackson, who when required, for purposes of law and order, to specify his profession, said vaguely, that he was "employed upon the streets."

"Knifer" was not tall, but very broad. His arms swung to his knees, the elbows out a little like an ape's trying to walk erect. The most prominent part of his face was his chin, and an upper lip which stuck out like the ram of an ironclad. There was at most times a kind of doubtful smile on Knifer's face, and "Don't pervoke me" was his word—"I know my weakness. Don't pervoke me!"

And as Knifer's best-known weakness was homicide —and homicide, too, with but a faint dividing line between it and murder—few people did care to provoke Knifer Jackson. Most certainly, however, he had worked a strange reformation in Mad Mag, his new wife, before she had kept house a month in Hagman's Close. It was whispered in Number Seven Land that Mag had once seen the Knifer in wrath. The other man died.

And from this and a few other circumstances had grown her respect for her husband. At any rate, the respect was there, as well as a curious desire to please her master. And as Mad Mag was well-looking in a bold, gusty way, though burnt so brown that her china-blue eyes made holes in her face, Knifer Jackson

rather liked to be seen out of doors with his wife on Sunday afternoons. They went down the length of the Pleasance, disappeared into a close, came out among the respectable houses in Arthur Street, and so downhill into the Queen's Park. There, as was customary, they went arm in arm.

It was on such an excursion, up among the gorse of the Whinny Hill, that Knifer earned his wife's admiration. It was soon after they were married, and Mag, having let down her hair so that the wind could blow through it, was wondering in her heart if she could wind this man round her finger as she had done Davie McGhie. They were both silent as the Sunday afternoon itself. Knifer lay with his chin on his hands, thoughtfully chewing a long grass. What he was thinking of may appear later.

In the meantime all was peace. But through the whins there crept upon the unsuspecting pair two sons of perdition, with foul-mouthed demands for money, and the information, palpably false, that they were private detectives.

"I'll detect you!" cried the Knifer, springing to his feet. "Go home, Mag, by St. Leonard's wee yett yonder, as fast as ye can. Leave me to settle with these two chaps. I've heard of them before!"

The two "private detectives" showed fight, being two to one. And Mag, fascinated, watched while one man went down like a hod of bricks, a broken arm doubled stiffly back beneath him in an impossible position. He cried and swore. Meanwhile Knifer Jackson pursued his companion, and Mag, running from knowe to knowe, followed the chase, till, with a great gulp at the throat, she saw the low sun of afternoon, striking from behind the black humps of Dalmahoy, shine on a polished blade held a moment high above the Knifer's head.

Then she ran for home, terror winging her feet as she went, and the sober Sabbath-walking people staring after her.

She was sitting on a chair, wide-eyed, panting, open-mouthed with fear, when, half an hour later, her husband entered, calm as ever.

"What—what—what?" she cried, all with the indrawing of a single breath.

"Gimme a bowl o' tea!" said the Knifer; "yon was a hot burst, Mag!"

"Did ye kill the man?" she gasped, putting both hands out to keep him off.

The Knifer smiled, dropped into a seat, and waved his hand toward the tea caddy.

"Never you mind aboot thae twa blackguards," he said not unkindly, all his anger having vanished away after the wiping of his knife; "put on the scaud!"

"But the poliss—the poliss?" said Mag, "they will tak' you away—ye will get years an' years for it, even if they dinna hang ye! And oh, Jimmy, but I'm fond o' you! Ye are sic a man! It was fearsome to see you angry!"

The Knifer, completely appeased, patted Mag, the subdued, on the shoulder, and bade her be of good heart. No policeman would meddle with him, nor any lawful magistrate put him to the question for what he had done that day.

"Lass," he said, "it was poliss wark I was doin'—wark that they canna weel do for themsel's. Dod," he exclaimed, laughing heartily at the recollection, "but I wish I had had time to look at their faces, when they fand that it was Knifer Jackson they had to deal wi'—Knifer Jackson an' his blithe wife Mag, sweetheartin' on the Sabbath afternoon amang the bonnie green busses o' the Whunny Knowe!"

And, truly enough, even as he said, no summons was taken out. The police of the city made no sign. Only an inspector or two "well in the know" nodded in a friendly manner to Knifer, and once in a row into which Knifer Jackson had quite casually elbowed his way, when he had been swept into a wide-spread

police net, the great Chief himself, after running an eye over him, just muttered, " Ah, Knifer Jackson ! All right ; we owe you one good turn ! " And so with the faintest jerk of his head to the side, he intimated to his subordinates that Knifer was to be let go his way.

Knifer acknowledged the courtesy with a touch of his cap, and a pull at his red-spotted, bird's-eye tie. Then he took out his pipe, filled it sedately, and marched off.

" The Chief kens me," he said, not without a certain pride ; " he will lay for Knifer when the time comes, keen as mustard, in the way o' business. But he kens bravely that Knifer wadna mix himsel' willin' in a shebeen row wi' ship-raw rats an' keelies frae the Greenside Sunk Flats ! Na, the Chief kens Knifer Jackson ! For a little mair, and if there hadna been sae mony folk aboot him, I wad hae offered him a fill o' his pipe. Aye, an' he wad hae taen it, too, freely and kindly, frae his auld acquaintance, Knifer Jackson."

From this it might be supposed that Knifer was a " nark," a " split," a " sawny plant "—which is to say a police spy upon the doings of his comrades. But no one, in the force or in the profession to which Knifer belonged, believed that for a moment. And they were right, Knifer was no " sawny plant." He did not " split." Those who called him " nark " would not get more than a contemptuous kick for their pains, the accusation being so extremely foolish.

It goes without saying that having seen Knifer win this great moral victory over his mother, Mag, his stepson adored him. The Kid had appeared, suddenly, at the door of the garret of the just-wedded, happy pair, in Number Seven Land, Hagman's Close, the residence of the bridegroom.

His mother had forgotten to mention him. She had thrown Tom Dinwiddie's spanner, with the mark on it, into the Messan Water, and, when she had been set free since the boy was not killed, she thought

no more about the matter. Small responsibilities, such as the Kid, sat very lightly on Mad Mag, late of Back Mill Lands, Kirkmessan.

At the sound of his voice she went to the door with the poker in her grasp. He would have been down the stair the next moment with a new clout in his crown for daring to come interfering with her, but the sharp voice of her husband fell, as it were, compulsively over her shoulder.

"Wha's that?" he demanded. He always liked to know who came knocking at his door. It was a peculiarity of his.

"Please sir, I'm the Kid!" said a faint voice.

"What kid?"

"THE Kid!"

"But wha's kid? Answer!"

"Juist *her* Kid—Mag McGhie's Kid!"

"Oh, Knifer, I forgot to tell ye," cried the once fierce virago, turning trembling to meet her husband's eyes; "dinna look like that at me—angrysome. He was come by honest—honest. He's Davie my man's boy, and the heir to some property i' the south country!"

"An heir, is he?" said Knifer, grimly. "Come ben, boy, and maybe we will find some way o' sharpenin' your mither's memory for the future!"

"Oh, Knifer, dinna, dinna!" groaned the cowed Mag.

And then the boy wondered at the man before him, thinking him to be a kind of god, who had wrought this marvellous change in his mother. Ministers, Salvationists, temperance folk, preachers unattached, elders, mission workers—all had had a try at Mag down in Kirkmessan, and she had chased them one and all from the door, and gone on worse than ever. Whence had this man this power and authority? *Even the devils obeyed him, trembling.*

It was indeed strange. But then the Kid had not seen the man's arm double under him as he fell in the afternoon glow on the Whinny Hill. Nor heard

the dreadful sudden scream of that other as the knife glittered a moment between his shoulder blades on the hidden slopes of the Hunter's Bog.

But Mad Mag had seen and heard these things. They conduced to sanity. They made for peace.

The Kid slipped in, taking it for granted that he had reached home. He had followed the trail of his mother without great difficulty, chiefly by inquiring at the police stations on the route to Edinburgh, and finding out if any officers had been recently assaulted in the discharge of their duty by a woman with light curly hair, blue eyes, and a sunburnt face. Mad Mag, still unreformed by the Knifer, was never difficult to trace.

So the Kid trickled round the corner of the door, edged a minute portion of his minute body on the chair the Knifer indicated to him, and sat shivering under the steady gaze of the small, deep-set, gray eyes, in which, too, there seemed to lurk a glint of the knife from which his stepfather got his name.

"So," he said, after a painful pause, "I've got a son, have I?"

Not knowing to what this might be the prelude, both mother and son sat silent under that steely regard.

"How far have ye come the day?" asked the Knifer, suddenly.

"Frae Peebles by Eddleston," said the boy, simply. "I travelled through the night, too, and then I hae been in the toon, speerin' for my mither!"

"Twenty-three miles, besides the speerin,'" said the Knifer, "that's none so dusty for a Kid! See that bar? The one across the corner where the clothes are drying. See if you can pull yourself up over it. Get your chin well over—that's it! Well done! And with one hand! You'll do! You'll do, Kid. Mag, make the bairn some tea. And I'll slice the ham. Kid, I adopt ye on the spot. Hang me, if I dinna be a father to ye!"

* * * * * *

"It is time ye began your 'prenticeship,'" said the Knifer suddenly, one morning, "you are getting too fat, Kid. In our profession it will not do to have overmuch flesh on our bones."

"If it's the same to you, sir," said the Kid, who had conceived a great respect for his stepfather (and justly), "I would like to have a little more schoolin'. I'm only in the 'Tenpenny Reader,' and I canna aye see my way through compound division. The fractions bother me."

"Right—right," said the Knifer; "I have little enough education myself, but if I had had more, it's me would have been the great man. But ye shall go to the school. Ye shall be entered as a half timer, laddie, working at the Bertram's Foundry in the Walk. And there are night schools, too, free, or nearly. But that will be little matter to the son of a well-to-do man like me. Ye will have to take my name, Kid."

"Na, I canna. I am a McGhie, ye see. I'm vexed, but I canna!"

Knifer Jackson's long upper lip drew down, and his chin pushed out, ominous with the firming of his jaw. The knife-keen gray eyes glittered. But the Kid never flinched.

"I dinna like to anger ye," he said, "I'll be a guid boy, an' do a' that ye tell me. But I'm a McGhie. My faither telled me that when he was deid I wad be '*The* McGhie'—the chief o' a' the McGhies that are."

"Does ony siller gang wi' it?" asked the Knifer, who did not see the force of barren dignities.

"I dinna think sae," said the Kid, uncertainly; "at least my faither got nane that I heard o', but then he would never ask. He was prood, my faither!"

"Are you like him?" the Knifer asked, a little maliciously.

"Na," said the Kid, blushing with shame, "I am said to favour my mither!" And at this the Knifer

threw back his head and laughed a thieves' laugh, gurgling and silent, deep in his throat.

"Come out," he said, suddenly, to the chief of the Clan McGhie.

As they went along, Knifer Jackson instructed the Kid. The matter of the surname was departed from. The boy's firmness in adhering to his birthright had settled that matter. He even mounted higher in the Knifer's favour.

"At the door ye will come to—I will show it to ye—ye will look this way and that on the street, and if ever there is a policeman or a man wi' thick-soled shoon that go *clunk-clunk*, or a man lookin' in a shop window at three red herrin', when he should be in a hurry because o' the rain or the wind, ye are never to gae near the school door. Mind that! It's a very private school, ye see!"

The Kid said that he would mind. He would do exactly what Knifer Jackson said, if so be he suffered for it. For Knifer had been kind to him, besides reforming his mother. Knifer must be a good man.

At this Knifer turned quickly about and cast a very sudden, shrewd glance at the Kid's serious face. But there was no jesting there, and somehow the Knifer (though he could do what we have heard of on the Whinny Knowe, and come quietly home to his tea) was strangely touched. He resolved on that spot that he would do all that he could to place the Kid in the very front ranks of the profession.

So the Knifer and the Kid descended gradually to the lowest cellar floor of the ancient town of Edinburgh. Toward its easterly part the deep defile of the Cowgate—formerly a bosky lane by which the callants of the city drove home the lowing kine to be milked twice a day, now a mere gorge of buildings thrown "reel-rall" together—divides into two parts, of which the one debouches toward the butt of the Calton, while the other holds away to the right in the direction of the Queen's Park.

The pair, holding hands, descended swiftly, striking this way and that, up alleys and down them again, apparently entering private houses by one door and leaving them by another, without ever so much as saying "by your leave" to the inmates, who, on their part, did not seem in the least surprised.

"I could never find my road back by mysel'!" said the Kid, as he plunged into another darksome passage, along which the Knifer dragged him at top speed.

"Coming back, it matters less," said the leader, "but the great thing is to tak' a new road every time!"

"But what am I to do?" asked the Kid; "I ken nane o' thae places."

"Ye will learn—ye will learn," said the Knifer, "and for a day or twa I will be here mysel' to bring ye hame. So see and be a clever scholar."

Kid McGhie promised. During the limited time he had spent at Dominie Tamson's, he had always been thought quick at his lessons. So he had no fear now.

They entered a long, narrow lane with bricked walls on either side, and a curious smell coming over them, musty and sweet. Knifer whispered that that was Elder's big brewery, which they would go and visit some night if he was a good boy. The Kid resolved to be a good boy.

Then quite suddenly, out of a dozen doors all alike, the Knifer chose one, opened it, shut it behind them, raced along a passage, mounted and descended flights of steps, turned at right angles, and finally tapped at a door. He bent his ear forward as one who listens keenly.

"Who's there?" came from within.

"Knifer and his Kid!"

"What do you bring?"

"*Six red herrin' for your tea!*"

The introduction made the Kid laugh. It was so

like one of his childish games down by the shore at Kirkmessan. He was certain that he would like this school. But he had not seen the Knifer buy any red herrings on his way. Curious that ! But perhaps he had brought them from home in his big inner pocket.

An undersized young man, with what would now be called a bicycle back, stood behind the door, and greeted the Knifer effusively. But the Knifer passed him with the slightest nod, like a lord of high degree in the presence of a menial—which, indeed, was pretty much the case.

" The schoolroom ! " said the Knifer, with a certain pride as they came out upon the most curious room that the Kid had ever seen, or, indeed, was ever likely to see. There was something really scholastic about it. Maps were still on the wall. The stains of ink remained on some of the desks which had not been hacked away for firewood, and in a corner was a little rack of canes mostly split and sadly in disrepair.

" Instruction *and* correction ! " said the Knifer, smiling grimly at these.

" It looks just like a school," whispered the Kid, awed in spite of himself, " but I don't see any master. And what are all these black boxes and things on the floor, and scattered all about ? "

" One question at a time, youngster," said the Knifer. " As to the master—he is not one, he is a lot ! I am one of them ! "

" You ? " cried his adopted son, looking at Mr. Jackson to see if he were in jest. But no, the Knifer was very much in earnest.

" And we come on a good day too," he continued ; " I'll get you entered among the intelligence runners directly. That's low—low—no ' class ' at all to speak of. But it's good and safe and does to blood the beginners on. There's a lot of the way-ups here to-day," he added, looking around. " Hey, Billy ! Come here ! "

A tall, gray-headed, respectable man, who might have been a country beadle out of a job, rose and came quietly to Knifer's side. He put his hand on the Kid's head.

"New stuff?" he inquired, "yours?"

"Aye, in a sort o' way—wife's kid—the first brood."

"Hum! He shapes well—thick about the shoulders, lean about the flanks. That's the way *I* like to see 'em!"

The tall, gray-headed, respectable-looking man was presently introduced to the Kid as Daddy Lennox, one of the most famous "breakers" in Edinburgh. And it was not long before Kid McGhie understood that it was the various methods of finding a way into other people's houses without previous invitation which the two worthies had under discussion.

To this the Kid had no serious objections. He had never been educated in any severe code of morals. It was even a convenience when his mother had been taken off to prison for theft. She appeared to find herself pretty comfortable there. The Kid, though he was glad to remain at liberty, had no rooted objection to confinement, if so stupid as to be caught. He had remained fairly honest up to date—apples, turnips, and biscuits off grocers' counters did not really matter. Besides, for the first time in his life, he was in the way of earning his livelihood.

As the Knifer explained, "There's scores and scores in the town who would give their ears for your chance to-day, sonny! It's on my account, ye see, Kid. For they think a heap o' me here!"

Which, indeed, was a thing evident of itself.

The Knifer on one side and Daddy Lennox on the other explained the various performances which were at present going on in the famous "Blind Jacob" school of burglary.

"Ye see," said Daddy, who was historical chorus, "this is no thing o' yesterday. What it was named 'Blind Jacob's' for, I'll tell ye. Ye hae heard o' Jacob's

Ladder. No the ladder the angels gaed clamberin' up an' doon, but the steps that begin aboot opposite the schule where the bairnies learn their lessons—aye, the high schule, that's it. Weel, in the days lang afore there was ony schule there, there was aye a Jacob's Ladder. For a heap o' folk cam' that road at a' hours o' the day an' nicht. It was at the time when the New Toon was a-biggin', an' by my faith it was a thrang road. Weel, laddie, there was a blind beggar there, that sat i' the corner where ye come oot up by what is noo Royal Terrace—I dinna ken his name. Nor does ony ither body that ever I heard o', though nae doot his faither or his mither gied him ane, like the lave o' us! But, ye see, he was aye caa'ed 'Blind Jacob' by a'body, till I really believe the craitur forgat his real name himsel'!

"Weel, this Blind Jacob had been a cabinet-maker, locksmith, whatnot, in the days o' his sicht, and, besides, a great crony o' the famous Deacon Brodie—him that was hanged in his sword and cocked hat like a great gentleman, at the drappin' o' his ain scented cambric handkerchief! And for a' he could see nane, this Blind Jacob was the grandest operator in a' the East-lands. He just needed to be led to a door, or ony lockfast place, and—*click*—it flew afore him!

"Of coorse it was easier in thae days to mak' a reppitation than it is noo, wi' siccan competition in the profession. An' there were nae weary Chubbs and Yale time locks to drive an honest man into his grave. Blind Jacob wad never hae dune what oor honoured friend, Knifer Jackson, here has dune—no if he had had as mony e'en as there are in a peacock's tail!"

Knifer Jackson acknowledged the imposing compliment with a grim smile. Daddy Lennox filled a pipe, dabbed it down tightly with his little finger, and lit up. As he smoked he talked. He was, to

all appearance, professor of history and keeper of the records to the senatus of " Blind Jacob's."

The Kid could not take his eyes off him. He was sure he had seen him standing by the plate at some kirk door or other, his hands crossed in front of him and an ear inclined to distinguish the bald clank of the vulgar penny from the sweeter tinkle of falling silver. The Kid did not frequent the insides of churches, but he often looked in at the door when he had nothing else to do. In the winter it was nice and warm, too, in the vestibule, after the elders and deacons had slipped on tiptoe along the aisles to their seats. So the Kid liked church-going, especially when Mad Mag had been " out " the night before.

" And this Blind Jacob," purred Daddy, the historian, blinking between puffs, " he was a man o' principle. He didna haud wi' Glasgow. Na, he was nae friend to that big muckle scrap heap o' hooses an' engine smuts. He was doon on Glasgow. And in thae days, as it continues even to the present time " (he spoke statedly, blowing a cloud between his sentences), " Glasgow had a famous schule for learnin' pocket pickin'. Oh, they can come it ower us in that, I allow. Say what ye like, Knifer, they have us there ! "

" They are welcome ; it's poor work ! " commented the Kid's adopted father, scornfully.

" Maybe—maybe," assented the philosopher, dispassionately, " yet the best authorities set it doon as ane o' the maist ancient pairts o' the profession. And there's siller in it—in a wealthy place like Glasgow, that is ! "

The Knifer nodded and yawned.

" Pouch nicking is all right—*for* Glasgow ! " he said, cracking his joints one after the other in token of boredom. The historian continued his moving tale :

" So this Jacob got a wheen lads o' the right sort thegither in a quiet ken—they had nothing like this

in thae days, of coorse. And he began to learn them. And he learned them an' learned them till there wasna a gentleman's hoose within twenty miles wi' an unbroken bolt or an untried hasp. It was Blind Jacob's lads that took thirty pound Troy weight o' goold and silver oot o' Penicuik Hoose ae Sabbath day, when Sir George was at the kirk—decent man, he was an elder, an' pit a guinea i' the plate every Sunday morning! Mair nor that, Jacob garred the countryside believe it was the gipsies, and some o' them were hanged for it too. Serve the carles right. They are forever stealin' hens and 'taties frae the farmers and giein' the profession a bad name!"

"Ummpha," quoth Knifer Jackson, "gipsies are bad harbourage — also tinklers! They spoil a' markets!"

"But," continued Daddy Lennox, looking meditatively at a slender youth vaulting feet foremost through the frame of a window held at various heights, and with differing widths of aperture, "the Glasgow folk have had naething to boast of, against us o' the East, ever since auld Blind Jacob's day! Na, he did it yince and for all, eh, Knifer? And what we see here is the fruit of his endeavours!"

Daddy Lennox inclined his head quite reverently, like a minister who has got through with an appropriate peroration. Instinctively, as he was used to do in the porches of the Kirkmessan churches, the Kid closed his eyes for the benediction. He felt somehow that it was time to make for the outer door, and bolt into the night.

But the next moment the Knifer's voice called him to other and more practical subjects. It was evident that the Knifer was intensely practical, and despised all but the most recent practice of the faculty.

"You see these boys," he said, "some o' them younger than you, Kid. Now, come along, watch them."

Down one side of the cobwebby disused hall, once a school for the children of those employed about the brewery (in the time of a certain Celie who married a certain junior partner), ran a series of doors, all complete in their frames, and fitted with locks, graduating from the huge, clumsy block, which the building contractor buys by the gross, to the dainty Chubb which shows no more than a little brass lid, to mark the place where the delicate key must be inserted which is to raise each of the complicated levers to its proper height. These doors were numbered in large white figures from one to twenty.

The Kid noticed that the boys in waiting seemed intent on little manuscript books of notes which they held in their hands. There were diagrams opposite each page.

"Door class!" called out the Knifer, in a voice so like that of the Kirkmessan schoolmaster that the Kid started.

Fourteen lads of various ages stood up at the summons, some smartly enough attired with spotted ties and stand-up collars, others without either collar or tie—these last being city "keelies," and country Johnny-raws like himself.

"Now, let's see," said the Knifer; "report progress! How far have we got? Beginners who can do less than five—here to the left!"

Seven of the fourteen fell out.

"Those who cannot pass number ten—to the right!"

This done, there were but two left—one, a great hulking fellow of eighteen, whose soiled and hardened hands showed the blacksmith's apprentice even if the nose had not scented the unmistakable burned smell of the horseshoeing, and a limber little fellow of fifteen, with eyes clear and bright, a scarlet tie, and good, unspoiled clothes, the trousers having an actual folding crease from the knee.

"Hey, Jock Cockpen, Duffus—ye are the lads," cried the Knifer, "ye will be credits to us yet—I dinna doot! You, Jock" (he addressed the smith's big apprentice), "how many are you good for?"

"I can tackle up to seventeen!" said the great fellow without pride and without shyness.

"And you, Duffus?"

The bright, small boy with the red silk ribbon about his neck, fumbled nonchalantly with a cigarette case—just then becoming the fashion—and replied with a girlish toss of the head, "If I had any decent tools to work with, I could begin at one side and come out at the other, but with the plough irons that one has to put up with here, I could only get as far as eighteen."

"Oh, young cock o' the walk," said Knifer Jackson, sharply, "what's the matter with the school tools? They have been good enough for a fine lot o' bursters, chipping the shell, as I know."

"That's just it," said Duffus, looking as if he would like to light a cigarette but feared a resounding box on the ear, "I am not a 'burster' you see, but a 'coaxer,' and I would as soon work with a girl's hairpin as with the whole class outfit. Why, half of them are so worn that they won't go into the keyholes."

"What do you do then?" said the Knifer, smiling at the boy's conceit.

"Oh," said the youth of the red silk tie, caressing his upper lip (smooth as an eggshell) with the end of a rolled cigarette, "for myself, I prefer using a wire off a gingerbeer bottle to all that ironmongery!"

"I've a good mind to kick you downstairs for an impudent young blackguard!" said the Knifer, "but speak up—what do you want?"

"To work with you, sir!" said the boy, his eyes sparkling. "If I could have half an hour of your turn-out, Knifer Jackson, I could guarantee to go

through a new improved XYZ time-and-word combination safe ! "

The Knifer turned to a shelf, and from it took down a little black bag such as a lawyer might carry his papers in, or a surgeon his instruments. There was a little gold key (or what looked like it) on his watch chain. He opened the bag with this, and after removing one or two heavier implements wrapped in oiled silk, he took out a roll of morocco leather. Duffus had approached, apparently drawn by an overwhelming desire.

Slowly the Knifer unrolled the long tawny coil. Strange clean-cut shapes of polished steel appeared, hooked and branched at the top, some made to screw together, others with nippers and grips, levers and wrenches—a whole battery curiously arranged for the infraction of doors and strong boxes.

" Oh," cried Duffus, clasping his hands with a kind of seraphic expression, " if I could only have a chance to use these once ! "

The Knifer handed him the roll instantly.

" Open number 20," he said, " and I will take you with me next job I do ! "

" Honour ? " queried Duffus, of the red tie, his eyes fairly goggling with delight.

" Honour ! " said Knifer Jackson, nodding his head.

And so, upon the honour which is among thieves, it was arranged. And thus ended Kid McGhie's first lesson in the burgling college founded by the famous " Blind Jacob," friend and pupil of Deacon Brodie, of pious memory.

CHAPTER V

"BLIND JACOB'S"

"YE see," said the Knifer, "there's decent and undecent in every trade. But Daddy Lennox an' me and a wheen mair does what we can to keep 'Blind Jacob's' respectable!"

At this the Kid wondered. For though the boys and youths who had been employed on the doors and black boxes had been well dressed enough—indeed, generally better than himself—he had listened to their discourse. And, with the exception of Duffus, of the red tie, and the blacksmith, their language had been vile beyond description. Now the Kid was dainty in this respect. His father had cast him on the world with few moral principles to speak of, but hatred, even to physical loathing, of foul speech was one of them.

And the masters appeared not to hear. Even the Knifer and Daddy Lennox chatted on calmly to each other amid the surf of profanity which beat upon their ears, as if not a word had reached them. And, indeed, it is exceedingly probable that it did not. When the Kid went first to the Pleasance, the roar of the coal carts setting northward along the street in the direction of the great mineral station of St. Leonard's awaked him six mornings out of the seven at half-past five exactly. But after a few weeks he slept serenely through the turmoil, and it was only the unwonted quiet of the Sabbath morn which roused him.

So if the scholars of "Blind Jacob's" had stopped

swearing, it is possible that Daddy Lennox and the Knifer would have remarked it.

The Kid did say something on the subject to the Knifer. But his stepfather made light of his complaint.

"You'll get used to it," he said, all too truly, "and, besides, if a boy has a foul tongue, you've got a sturdy fist. Fighting is not allowed in 'Blind Jacob's,' but you are at liberty to settle with him outside. I'll speak to the blacksmith to put you in decent training and see fair play."

The Knifer had no reason to be dissatisfied with his *protégé*. Perhaps the possession of a dainty set of tools—the Knifer's third best—made progress easy. Envious comrades said so. Perhaps he had also some natural skill of touch. Otherwise he owed most to the kindly laconic instructions of the blacksmith, Jock Cockpen. Be all that as it may, the Kid rose in ten days out of the scouring undisciplined ranks of the intelligence class into the "ordinary lock" form. He was glad of this. Because, you see, he was not a city boy, and the intelligence class were really scouts sent to find out all about the habits of the inmates of some house which was to be "tried." The number and disposition of the servants, their nights and afternoons out, their Sunday excursions, who went to church, and who stayed at home—for each of the three services on the Sabbath—at what times the family dined, had family worship (if any), when the bedrooms were clear, when the living rooms —what lights were to be expected in the house at night—which were the bedrooms and who slept there—if a dog, big or little, lived on the premises (this was important), *and* if a revolver was kept.

All this information, the Kid found, had to be sifted, and that carefully. Once he fell into disgrace with his intelligence teacher, one Keily Cobb, a severe man with beetle brows, an ex-railway policeman, who had tried to improve his position in the interests of a persistent thirst. The Kid's fall was owing

to a page boy with a cherub face, who must have been worth his weight in gold to the house he served. He had a most picturesque imagination. He lied the Kid outside in, as he afterwards boasted. He " smoked a plant " from the very first question, though the Kid began artfully enough by the offer of a cigarette specially manufactured for the purpose of stunting the growth of page boys. The Kid's report very nearly disorganised the instructors of the college. For two professors of " Blind Jacob's," one of them the ex-railway policeman, went the very next night to reconnoitre the mansion of the page boy. There they fell into a trap, from which only their speed of foot saved them, and that, too, at the expense of a valuable lever for forcing hasps of windows in a horizontal direction without any breaking of the glass. This beautiful piece of scientific instrument making, the property of " Blind Jacob's " college, had to be abandoned. The page boy, with filial fondness, hid it under his coat, and gave it to his grandmother, who was out of a coal hammer at the time. It was the old lady's birthday, and he was a boy who spared no expense.

Keily Cobb, who had contracted the soft, insinuating manners common to all railway policemen, said some few words to the Kid on his calling the class roll the next morning—words which fairly blistered with energy. He added that if the Kid had not come to " Blind Jacob's " in the way he had done, he would have been kicked over the wall, and that, in any case, the price of the lever would be deducted from his first earnings.

In all innocence, and because it was the Kid's nature not to owe any man anything, he told the Knifer the sad story of his debt to the college.

" Keily Cobb said that, did he ? " his stepfather and sponsor remarked, grimly.

" He *did* say so, but perhaps he did not mean anything ! " said the Kid.

"Ah, perhaps!" said the Knifer, and strode away to invite the ex-policeman to a private explanation, which was brief and to the point.

"Once a poliss, always a poliss," said the Knifer, menacingly. "Keily Cobb, ye are well aware that the information that the twelve tribes bring in to the intelligence class is public property, and not to be used without permission by private individuals. Now, Keily Cobb, did you bring this matter before the council? No, I should have heard of it, if ye had done so. Ye made a private 'spec' of it—you and the slipper man. You could get my Kid kicked out, could ye? Why, man, I have only to move my finger to *get* you kicked out, and, as ye are a 'ratting' policeman, the council might think it safer to let it be with an article like this atween your shoulder blades."

The wretched Keily Cobb grovelled, clasping his hands, and moving his feet in a constant nervous shuffle.

"Oh, no, no, Knifer," he pleaded, "not to the council. Don't take it to the council! Hammer me if ye like, but don't bring it up at the meeting!"

"Very well, Cobb," said the Kid's sponsor, "then ye'll please report that my laddie is a fit and proper person to be removed to the ordinary fastenings class—he has had quite plenty of your sort o' training. There are always enough area sneaks ready to do that sort o' thing for a good handy boy. And there is no use of the Kid wasting more o' his time!"

"I quite agree wi' you," said Keily Cobb; "I will see to it."

And so, in this simple way, the Kid received a rise in the world.

These were days full of interest for the Kid. He had no idea that he was doing anything really wrong. It was a business in which he could show his gifts and his application, just as in another. He accompanied Jock Cockpen to his smithy in Leith Wynd,

where the carters brought their horses to be shod. And they, as it seemed to the Kid, swore even more disgustingly than the boys in the school. The Kid wondered if he could never achieve success without that. But when he came to think of it, the real "nobs" hardly ever practised it. There was the Knifer, for instance. Did he swear? Oh, no; he measured his words far too carefully. When he was pleased, he turned the corners of his lips a little, a very little, up, and a general sense of peace and well-being overspread all his world. The lips turned down, and immediately everyone stood from under! But swear—oh, no! The Knifer did not swear. Nor did Daddy Lennox. He talked too much. He always had such a pour of things to say, that bad words, which took time to articulate, could find no place. Besides, they were not historical except in the dying speeches of the great luminaries of the profession who had finished their course on the scaffold, especially cursing assembled multitudes.

Duffus, of the red tie, that hope of "Blind Jacob's," did not swear. He was too clever. Oaths did not help on the giddy heights to which he aspired. Night watchman in a good bank was about Duffus's size —at present, that is. Afterwards he might rise to be a director. But Duffus knew the advantage of beginning at the very bottom of the ladder. *He* had never been taken in by a page boy. He had been one himself.

Of course, however, his shining abilities made him somewhat "upsetting" and haughty in his relations with his fellows, and he gave the Kid to understand that it was merely as the son of his father that he condescended to speak to "the likes of him." However, Duffus did not swear. Night watchmen in banks have no one to swear at, and, besides, Duffus meant to be diligent in his calling. He was the son of a respectable clerk, and from his knowledge of his father's life, he was firmly resolved not to spend

his life sitting on a stool. But a regular life, strict attention to business, the living of laborious days, and (by the nature of his avocation) nights still more laborious, would in time, according to "Poor Richard's Almanack" and the precepts of the late B. Franklin, which his father had instilled into him as a religion, conduct him to a modest competence. Then (it would be duller, but, after all, one cannot always be young) he would betake himself to some little county town—Kinross, Peebles, Cromarty, or such like, and there buy a watchmaker's and jeweller's shop, goodwill and all. His training would fit him for the mechanical part, and, he swore by the original blind Jacob, he would know how to look after his stock. He would be a clever fellow who would steal from "A. Duffus, late of Edinburgh, watchmaker and jeweller—repairs carefully and promptly executed —clocks wound by the month or year." He would go on the town council, and perhaps—who knows—one day he might be provost. A. Duffus was a clever fellow, the shining Admirable Crichton of the school, and, of course, it goes without saying, far too clever to waste his breath in profane swearing.

The blacksmith, solid, rather dull, good-humoured Jock Cockpen, did not swear either, unless one might call a certain sudden explosive sound, like the first inquiring growl of a good watch-dog when he hears a strange footstep, a "swear." This gust of noisy wind occurred when Jock burned his fingers more than usual in the smithy, or when a fine "double-curve" fishing hook slipped and ran under his finger nail. But so far as any meaning went, this might have been, and perhaps was, a prayer.

Dull Jock, with his clever fingers, was one of the best influences in the "Blind Jacob's" class rooms. Specially was this evident after he passed into the highest or safe and strong-box department, with private tuition (an extra) in time locks and the latest improvements in "open sesame" code work. Here

the extremely technical nature of the lessons and the amount of mathematics involved was apt to be a tax on these simple natures, unaccustomed to restraint. Many full-blown professionals, indeed, did not think it at all beneath their dignity to attend the lectures. And these, swaggering in low-cut waistcoats, reefer jackets, and (in some cases) heather-mixture knickers, could not very well be put under the same discipline as the regular students.

Now all this could not, of course, go on in a city the size of Edinburgh, without the police of the city hearing something of " St. Jacob's "—as the chief in his hours of ease called the college of burglary. It was a foundation of ancient date, and that it was still abundantly flourishing, the columns of the morning papers were the best witnesses.

If Captain Henderland did not know the *locale*, the curriculum, the appliances, the examinations, and the diplomas of " Blind Jacob's," he knew it —by its works.

The leading professors were, in a sort of way, his personal friends. He spoke to them familiarly when he crossed them " hoofin' it " homewards in the twilight. He knew well that they had been engaged on business of the fraternity. Yet he did not interrupt them. He never thought of apprehending them on such occasions. He knew well that if he did so, all he would find would be a couple of soup tickets, a penny Testament, a pouch of tobacco (empty), and their mother's picture.

The swag, if they had pulled it off, would long ago be in other hands, hidden in far cellars, covered up in blameless wood yards, under the bacchanalian drip of beer barrels—anywhere—anywhere ! Only not in the pockets of these high-learned professors of the light-fingered art.

Therefore wary Captain Henderland only exchanged courtesies with them, casually mentioning to his subordinates that he had met Knifer Jackson down

by the gas works, and then did his best to set the watch more carefully for the next time.

Good Mr. Molesay, the police missionary, knew them too. But he did not waste any words upon the concerns of *their* souls. His business was chiefly with the other sex, the sex which was not allowed, on any pretext whatever, to penetrate into "St. Jacob's." It was from among women, girls, and thievish untaught boys, snatching apples from street shops, that Mr. Molesay drew his chief trover. He knew about "Blind Jacob's"—as, of course, he knew everything—from the women who were not admitted there, but who were as curious about it as Eve would have been if Adam alone had had the key of the garden where the apple was.

It was owing to this monastic exclusion of women that "Blind Jacob's" had lasted so long. But all the same, in moments of unbounded ease, to this and that towsy Bet and blowsy Moll its graduates had talked unwisely but too well. So, under the seal of the confessional, of course, Mr. Molesay knew a lot.

It was through a woman, too, that Mr. Molesay, of the city mission (and a regular official of the municipality), got on the track of the Kid. One of his best and most promising patients was Kate Earsman, whose "man" was Billy Earsman, barman and "bully" to a notorious establishment in the Cowgate, called the "British Imperial Palace," which had so many entrances that closing time never happened to all of them at once. You had only to go all round the British Imperial Palace to find a spot where it was always afternoon, and never by any chance ten o'clock and closing time! Sundays were admittedly more difficult, for the B. I. P. was no shebeen. But the landlord and also his barman, Billy Earsman, were hospitable men. You could be accommodated as friends of the family. You paid nothing—*that* day. But if you showed a reluctance to settle on Monday,

or by Tuesday at the latest, Billy Earsman would call upon you, and, if you did not pay on the nail, it were better for you to be scudding along the Great North Road toward London. There was, of course, some leakage in this way, but a little increase in the price (to cover risks) more than squared all that, and everyone was satisfied.

Billy Earsman, then, was " straight." At least he was only crooked under cover, as it were, of his principal, and in his service. All the same, a great many people thought it wise to stand well with Billy, who might be seen from morning till midnight, with his shirt sleeves rolled up, within the bar of the British Imperial Palace, pulling shining brass levers, wiping zinc, and settling quarrels. Sometimes he settled them so thoroughly that the settlements were removed to the Royal Infirmary peacefully reposing on the same push cart, the pusher primed with a suitable lie, provided by the establishment. Ogg, the " boss," kept a stock of these.

Now Billy Earsman had a wife, wedded according to the easy Scottish fashion (which is yet as binding as any other). Kate Earsman was a little, dark, quick-tripping mite, with a sharp tongue and a very decent heart of her own. She had once been a barmaid, and for the best part of a year her *répliques* were famous over the city—that is, among young men of a certain counter-leaning, graceful cigarette-lighting type. But after she had " fallen in with " Billy Earsman she ceased to interest this class. Billy intimated that he would " slug " any qualified split-soda rooster (such was his vulgar way of talking) who dared to say a cross word to Kate. That lost her her situation. For Messrs. Gape and Suck, the well-known *restaurateurs*, do not put up with that sort of thing in any of *their* young ladies. So Billy Earsman, though a bit rough, being at heart a " straight un," forthwith married Kate, and took a little flat for her in a decent house, within hailing distance of the

British Imperial Palace, in the very swing of Cowgate life and bustle.

Their happiness had been great for three years. And then Kate, who had begun before she left "Gape and Suck's" to take a little stimulant—just to enable her to stand the long hours and the "being on her feet"—lost her little girl.

She was only just a baby, but she walked at nine months, most wonderfully enunciated "Dada" at eleven, and could count as far as three before she was eighteen months. To these marvels let it be added, always on her mother's authority, that she could say *gu-gu* with a "perfectly sweet" intonation whenever she wanted her bottle, that she hammered on the board in front of her little chair with a spoon in the most natural manner, and that to see her hiccough was a sight entrancing in the highest degree. Never in the world was there a happier ex-barmaid. Never certainly a happier barman! But Baby Earsman caught a cold, rapidly developed diphtheria in the damp, raw air which sinks into the trough of the Cowgate—the same which makes little child funerals, with the father carrying the tiny coffin like a violin case under his arm, and two or three forlorn men trudging through the mud, the commonest of winter sights.

Of course Billy Earsman did not "put away" his little Polly in this way. By no means. He had a proper hearse and a pair of horses, and his principal, King Ogg, great magnate of the Cowgate world of publicans, having explained that both he and Billy could not be absent from the B. I. P. at the same time, compromised for his absence by sending three proper mourning carriages from Croan's, the great undertaker's in the Walk. So if black horses, flowing manes and tails, solemn, impenetrable coachmen, could have made up to Kate Earsman for the loss of little Polly, she would have mourned no more.

Never had such a sight been seen in the Cowgate.

People came from as far as " Blind Jacob's," on the one hand, and Nelson's printing works, on the other, to see the sight. And the boy who tried to throw a gob of mud at a black-coated, solemnly rosetted coachman with streamers on his hat, received a lesson that he will never forget. When he crawled out of the gutter into which fifty feet had kicked him, and had begun to rub the various blue places, he comprehended that there was to be " none o' that " on the day of the burying of Billy Earsman's little Polly.

But when Billy was gone—with Polly in the box—Kate would not call it a coffin, though it had white satin within, polished oak and silver without—Kate Earsman, wife and mother, was left alone. You see she was only a poor little barmaid who had been so happy, who had had the finest, the dearest, ah—sobbed Kate Earsman here—" there never was a baby like my Polly."

Of course there was not—there never is ! Poor mother, empty heart, empty house, little empty bed that hurts—oh, how it hurts ! Never another child like that one which was lost that all unforgotten day—or like any mother's only child, in any dreary house, on any desolate day !

So Kate Earsman took—who shall cast the first stone ?—" something to drink," and Mr. Molesay on his return from the funeral found himself with a job on his hands. For a time the poor little mother seemed to have buried her self-respect in Polly's grave. She wanted to forget, and she took the easiest way—the way that so many have trodden to the point beyond which there is no hope—at least none for a woman.

Billy Earsman behaved wonderfully well—even when he knew that poor Kate was inventing excuses to get him out of the room so that she might disinter the bottle of brandy she had so carefully hidden. The causeless laugh, the vacant, wandering eye, even the maudlin tenderness betrayed her. But

Billy, rightly interpreting his duty, and schooled by Mr. Molesay, said nothing in anger. It was because of Polly, he repeated to himself, and when any light tongue glanced in the direction of his wife's frailty, Billy's eye flared sudden and unmistakable.

"One other word and I'll stretch you!" was what it said.

But Mr. Molesay kept it prominently in Billy's mind that help would come not by might nor by power, but by a certain still small voice—that same voice which told Billy that it was not wrong for him to "stretch" wrong-doers in the B. I. P., but it *was* wrong for him to take a handful of gold and silver out of his master's till.

"It's like this, Billy," said the missionary, "we must fill the gap. Nature abhors a vacuum—they taught me that at college. It's not much I learned there that I find of use to me down here in the Cowgate. But it just means, Billy, that if God has seen fit to take little Polly out of your wife's life, *we* must put something else in."

"I'll do my best," said Billy Earsman, slowly, "but it takes time—that does! It's a big vacancy Kate has got."

"I mean," said Mr. Molesay, quickly, "get her interested in something. Now what do you say to our meetings, Billy? Ever been to any of them? They're not dull, you know—hymns, harmonium, solos, a magic lantern for the children (and, indeed, the grown-ups don't dislike that part either), a warm hall, good air, a little tea and talk afterwards among the workers!"

"Nice thing it would be to see me, sir," grinned Billy, "all the week at Ogg's Pub. handing out pints o' beer as if I were weavin' a web, and then a-Sundays *do-ray-me-ing* 'Jerusalem the Golden'! No, Mr. Molesay, sir—I like you, but it wouldn't do! Indeed it wouldn't!"

"Not for you, perhaps," said Mr. Molesay, who

was a wise man, and did not sow his wheat where only oats would grow, "but for Kate!"

"Kate had better learn to be——" Billy began, flushing hotly.

"Yes, I know," said Mr. Molesay, "but then she only flies to the drink to drown her sorrow. *You* know how vain that is—how it just gets back at you three times worse afterwards. Well, all I want, Billy, is just a promise that you won't interfere if I do get your wife interested in my mission. You won't make fun of her——"

"Umm—I'm a funny man by nature, I know," said Billy, bitterly, "but losing our little Polly, and Kate takin' it like this, don't strike me as more than average amusin'! I think I can manage to keep from heehawin' sir, out loud! If I don't, I give you leave to kick me hard!"

Mr. Molesay, the city missionary, was a quiet little man with very pleasant eyes. He was clean shaven, and had the true silver-glinting hair which comes only to dark men who turn grey early. He was no great preacher, they said, in the pulpit, but give him three or four square yards of a mission-room floor, and a Cowgate audience—then, I vouch for it, you heard something.

Well, Mr. Molesay went to work with Kate. She had a voice, a pretty, clear contralto, not strong, but with certain curious low notes in it—something like the jug-jug in the song of the nightingale, that took the listener by the throat. Mr. Molesay spoke to Leo Morse, the great singer, about her. Morse had once been a celebrated operatic don, but had suddenly seen the heavens opened and eternity looking through at him. It had been through the rifted bottom of a Pullman sleeper, and his travelling companion in the upper berth lay dead across him, between him and the quiet stars. Since that he had spoken much to his fellows of the things which are not yet, as these had been revealed to him in that moment

of time. He called this his experience. It was not that, for of true experience he had had none. But at any rate it was a genuine impulse, and Mr. Molesay employed him, both to speak in the Cowgate City Mission Hall, and, above all, in managing to organise the singing, which was his great attraction.

"Ah," said Leo Morse when he had listened to Kate's simple warbling, "there is not a trace of training, of course—but, if she had had it, she might have done great things!"

"I don't want her to do great things, Morse," said Mr. Molesay; "indeed, I am particularly desirous that she should do nothing of the kind. But—I suppose you couldn't—ah—it would be impossible to give her a few lessons—yourself, I mean!"

"Quite, I fear," said the great man. "You see, I have my bread to earn now I don't sing in opera, and my own pupils take up all my time—that is, when I am not down here with you!"

Mr. Molesay looked disappointed and sighed. Leo Morse, also, threw back his long black hair, and seemed more pensive than usual.

"But," he continued, "I know a lady—a young lady, who might give her what she wants. I suppose you only want this girl to sing solos and things here at your meetings."

"That, of course," said the missionary. "But it is life or death to keep her occupied in the right way for the next few months. She has just lost her only child, a little girl!"

"Ah!" said Leo Morse, very softly. Then he nodded his head slowly. A curtain drew up suddenly, and he saw a part of his own past he did not often think about—a little home, a bright face, a cradle, then a blank day, and nights when he went home to bitterness and desolation.

"Ah," he murmured again, more softly still. "I think I will take your Kate Earsman in hand myself. When can she come?"

Then very joyfully Mr. Molesay arranged matters with Kate and her husband. To Kate he said that this was the one chance of her life. Which was true, but did not interest her greatly, seeing she believed that life was over for her and buried in Polly's grave. But she looked across at her husband, and he nodded brightly.

"Do as Mr. Molesay says, Kate," said Billy. "I'm sure Polly'd be proud!"

"Do you think she will know? Will she hear —if I can learn to sing a solo in the mission hall? Would she be there?"

She turned eagerly and trustingly to Mr. Molesay as to an acknowledged spiritual authority on such subjects.

The good man did not stop to chop theology. He cared not a button for eschatology. But he knew his business, and answered without hesitation that there was not the least doubt that Polly would hear her mother singing in the mission choir and be happy thereat.

Not content with that, he set about to prove it. Which was not so wise; though, in its way, it was ingenious, too. "Their angels," he said, "'do always behold the face of God.' So it is written of the children. Now God hears prayer—therefore also praise. Therefore those 'in the Presence' will also hear, as courtiers may listen to the songs sung at a king's banqueting table."

Perhaps it would have been better if Mr. Molesay had not expanded his simple affirmation, because, while he was speaking, he saw Kate's eyes wander, and he knew she was thinking of her Polly lying out there in a far corner of the Dean. But still this led to something. For it caused Kate to speak of a little friend she had made recently—a strange laddie, belonging to people with nothing good in them, but still having much good in himself. He had seen, in one of his rambles, the forlorn little

mother kneeling at Polly's grave. And the next day when she went to the Dean Cemetery, lo! on the grave lay a bouquet of wild flowers.

The country boy must have gone far afield for those. And every day since, moved by some feeling of sympathy for the suffering he was just beginning to understand, the Kid had laid his offering on the tomb—garden flowers mostly, as the season grew later, and the days shortened. It will not be advantageous to inquire too carefully as to how he came by these. But at any rate, Kate had made a friend, and as it chanced, the Kid had made many more.

"'McGhie's Kid'—that's what he calls himself!" said Kate smiling, "but at present he lives with a man named Jackson—Knifer Jackson—I think he said."

The two men looked at each other, and the barman whistled, a long, low, comprehensive whistle.

"Kate," said her husband, "you're getting in choice company these days. Knifer Jackson has seen the inside of more men's houses than I've ever seen of churches—more shame to me, I dare say. And there's one or two that have owed their longest sleep to him, if all tales be true!"

"He does his killing among his own sort, though," said Mr. Molesay. "When he does real business he leaves his knife at home and trusts to a wire or two on the lawn!"

"I dare say," laughed Billy, "if I were to abuse the devil before you, Mr. Molesay, you would find something to say for him."

"I dare say there *is* something to be said!" retorted the missionary, smiling.

Then he turned to Kate, the barman's wife.

"Well, anyway, Kate, let me see your young friend the first day you can entrap him up here," he said. "I will look in. Perhaps we can get him out of his bad surroundings."

For Mr. Molesay knew well that everything is

comparative, and that there is a whole world of difference between "Blind Jacob's" and Hagman's Close, where dwelt the stepson of Knifer Jackson, and the cozy home of the barkeeper, Billy Earsman, and his wife Kate—even if Billy broke on an average half a dozen heads a day in the pursuit of his calling.

A broad-minded, hard-working, Christian man was Mr. Molesay, shrewd and yet childlike, with a soul much too big for his body, and methods of doing his work too original for the most tolerant denomination.

So it was about this time that the Kid began to live a double life.

CHAPTER VI

ARCHBOLD MOLESAY, CITY MISSIONARY

"FISHERS of men!" said Mr. Molesay to his friend, the minister of the Peden Memorial Kirk in the Cowgate, a fellow-worker in the city deeps. "'Tis a true word. But if your basket be like mine, Mr. Rodgers, the catch is a light one!"

The minister shook his head, gazing abstractedly out of the little oriel window which looked up and down the grimy defile. For the Rev. Harry Rodgers was not of those slum ministers who live comfortably in the suburbs, and look in on their parishioners when they have their sermons finished, and there is no one handy to play golf with.

"And sometimes," he broke out, suddenly, "when we do get a bite, as like as not it's an eel or a hungry brute of a dogfish."

"Anything been annoying you, Rodgers?" said Mr. Molesay.

They had been at college together, these two, and had kept up their intimacy.

"Only that abominable poison spot, 'Blind Jacob's.' I hate it, and all its works!" cried the minister. "It poisons everything. Sometimes I think the police don't *want* to root it out. All they do is to chivvy it about from one place to another, about once in three months or thereby!"

Mr. Molesay thought awhile.

"Perhaps there's more in it than that," he said, presently; "it centralises and in a way modifies

the blackguardism of the city. 'Blind Jacob's' doesn't allow any knife-and-revolver work, and I think the general tone has improved in my time."

"I am astonished at you, Molesay," said Mr. Rodgers. "Rank burglary is the essence of the matter—the teaching of it to children——"

"Ah, that's true enough," sighed Mr. Molesay, "and a heartbreak it is to me. But I'm none so sure, if 'Blind Jacob's' were broken up, that things would be much improved."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Rodgers. "You've lived too long in this atmosphere, Molesay. You are beginning to see things with a squint—just as madhouse doctors become mad if they stick too closely to their profession."

"So I may end by becoming a burglar, and even a professor in 'Blind Jacob's,' eh?" cried the silver-headed missionary.

"Well, not exactly," said Rodgers, whose sense of humour was not his strong point—rather it was the steady, firm, grave devotion to duty which made him the power he was in that dim place; "not exactly! But—don't forget, Molesay, that it never does to confuse right and wrong. Right is right, and wrong wrong, in the Cowgate as elsewhere. 'Blind Jacob's' is bad—conception, execution, influence, all its works—and the sooner it is rooted out the better!"

"I suppose so," said Mr. Molesay, gently. "Yes, you are right. It ought to be done. It must be done. But when it is done, mark me, there will be an outbreak of the old bad days—killing will be held no murder, and there will be no authority as at present, severe enough of a kind, over the rascaldom of the city!"

"I see this clearly enough," said Mr. Rodgers, doggedly, "that one can face only one problem at a time. And—you know Henderland has resigned the chiefship of police. I've just been to the Lord Provost with some drastic suggestions, one of which

is that the first duty of his successor should be to root out and utterly destroy 'Blind Jacob's.'"

"Very well," said Mr. Molesay. "Of course you know best, and as you say, right is right. You know your duty, and must do as your conscience tells you. But from the point of view of *my* parishioners, none of whom ever enter a church door, I think you have put your hand into a wasp's nest. Henderland was perhaps not so modern in his methods, nor so conceited as some. But—he had been chief for twenty-five years. And when anything went wrong, he would say on hearing the circumstances, 'that's one of three men!' and name them forthwith. Then he would have the three men up, and make them prove the employment of their time on the night in question. There were, of course, the usual breakings into jeweller's shops, which ought to have been better guarded, and the same bathroom-window robberies, where the hasp had been left open. Safes and strong boxes were tried and sometimes a booty pulled off. But these things were carefully graded, and generally justice was done. The man got his five or his seven years as a matter of course, and came out without bearing any great animosity toward the man who had only beaten him at his own game. But how often during these twenty-five years have you seen the black flag rise over the Calton at eight o' the morning, as it used to do every three weeks in the bad old days? That was Henderland—only Henderland—nothing but Henderland!"

"Maybe—maybe," said Mr. Rodgers, "but I, for one, am for no bargainings with evil, not if the black flag were to go up every morning regular as breakfast rolls. I think you go on a wrong principle altogether, Molesay. You know the text—'that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' Nothing else will be of the least use."

"God help my little crowd, then," groaned Molesay;

"they are imperfect enough, even as I am. Rodgers, I hold rather with that disciple who said, 'Lord, are there few that be saved?'—hoping, like him, that there may be many."

"Yes," said Rodgers, "and you would be snubbed like him and told to attend to your own case—'Strive ye to enter in at the strait gate!' was all *he* got!"

"Well, well—I haven't time to think of my wretched self," said Molesay. "I have been so long in the front fighting line. This constant forlorn-hope business gives a fellow little time to think of drill—though, doubtless, drill helps to carry him through. Man, Rodgers, I declare I don't even pray very much now. Shocking, isn't it? I haven't time. But for all that, I can understand that fellow who sends his electricity into space, on the chance that some one will hear his cry for help. So, when I get quite heartsick with the squalor and the misery and the crime, which none regards (not even, to all appearance, God Himself), I send my cry up between the darkening roofs toward the sky and the stars. Let Him answer —*if He will.* He is far away, and, with the press of universes, has doubtless many claims. But I —I myself—Rodgers, have these poor creatures before me and behind—a barman, whom all the world thinks a brute—I see him growing like Him of Nazareth, even while his hands are on the beer pull. 'Impossible!' you say. 'No Christian can be a barman! He would break stones first!' Well, you do not know Billy Earsman, the bully at Ogg's Imperial Palace, that's all!"

"Ogg's—that dreadful place at the Wynd corner! Ogg has been up half a dozen times for keeping open after hours!" cried Mr. Rodgers, horrified. "Surely you cannot defend him?"

"Perhaps I might have something to say even for Ogg, King of Imperial Bashan," smiled Molesay. "but it is of Billy Earsman, his barman, that I am speaking. He has a fight to fight that I am trying

to give him a hand with—a dead baby—a wife, pretty, young, and fretting herself into drink. I have no time to instruct him in all the Law and the Prophets. But he makes his morning and evening sacrifices all the same. In the morning he tells his wife that she is looking better, younger, bonnier every day, that she sings more sweetly; and in the evening he comes home early, and washes up to take her a walk in the park or to the Botanical Gardens. Or, in the winter, he comes to our choir practices to hear his wife sing. And to tell you the truth, Rodgers, I can't for the life of me see much difference between the beer pull at Ogg's and the servants filling the wine jars at Cana of Galilee!"

"Molesay, this is sheer blasphemy!" cried the minister of the Peden Memorial Kirk.

"I hope not," said Molesay, smiling and nodding his meek little silvery head, the best known in all the quarter of the Cowgate, "I hope not. But I and mine are a feeble folk—like Peter, we follow afar off."

"Ah!" said Mr. Rodgers, sharply, "and you know what Peter did just after that—he denied his Master three times!"

"So he did—so he did," said the gentle little man; "but when all is said and done, he followed, didn't he—when all the rest forsook Him and fled? That was always something, wasn't it, Rodgers?"

"D'ye mean to say——?" began the pastor.

Mr. Molesay held up his hand.

"I mean to say nothing, Rodgers, except that once a certain Master of the house of whom you have heard was angry, and He said to His servants, 'Go forth quickly into the streets and the lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind—and go into the highways and the hedges and compel them to come in. For none of those men that were bidden shall taste of My supper.'"

There was a moment's silence between the two men, so different in head, so one in heart. It was broken by Mr. Molesay asking when Mr. Rodgers could come and talk to "his folk," and the pair of them began settling on the following Thursday at eight, immediately after the magic lantern. Then he (Rodgers) would hear Kate Earsman sing, and meet another little "kid of the goats," name not specified. Note-books were produced, entries were made, hands were shaken, and, after all, the two—sturdy Calvinist and mere labourer in hope—parted in a mild, kindly atmosphere of mutual tolerance, if not of understanding.

And Mr. Rodgers, left alone, continued to look out of the little oriel window, and say over and over Molesay's last phrase. It haunted him like an echo: "A kid of the goats"—"A kid of the goats!" Where had he heard it? Ah, he had it. He had not looked into Arnold's poems since he was a young and enthusiastic lad, with his beliefs not yet crystallised into a system, and squared to a chalk line. The book was dusty. It was the small green-cloth Golden Treasury volume of selections, every page minted gold to many a heart that was young in the later seventies. Rodgers ran his fingers over the pages, getting glimpses as he went of unforgotten lines and phrases, yet not pausing till he came upon the great sonnet of which this is the title:

THE GOOD SHEPHERD WITH THE KID.

"*He saves the sheep, the goats he doth not save!*"
So rang Tertullian's sentence, on the side
Of that unpitying Phrygian sect which cried:
"Him can no fount of fresh forgiveness lave,

Who sins, once washed by the baptismal wave"—
So spake the fierce Tertullian. But she sighed,
The infant church! Of love she felt the tide
Stream on her from her Lord's yet recent grave.

And then, she smiled. And in the Catacombs,
With eyes suffused, but heart inspired true,
On those walls subterranean, where she hid
Her head 'mid ignominy, death, and tombs,
She her Good Shepherd's hasty image drew—
And on his shoulders—not a lamb—*a kid!*

"It's rank Arminianism—and the source—suspect," said Rodgers, putting the book thoughtfully back on its shelf. "But, after all, I don't know but what I believe it. '*Not a lamb—a kid:*'" He quoted the words over and over as he went downstairs. So much so that his wife, busily cutting up the portions for the children, and for several indigent waiters at the back door, wrinkled an already sufficiently worried brow at him, and asked him what he was muttering about.

"A kid of the goats!" he said, absently.

Now Mrs. Rodgers had no sympathy with philosophic abstractions.

"Serve the gravy, and say grace," she said, curtly. "The children are waiting, and Johnny will be late for school!"

. . . . .

As for Mr. Molesay, he went south-eastward in the direction of Hagman's Close. The sight of his rain-battered soft hat, a little greener at the brim, especially at the place where the drip ran down, the streaky gray hair shining aureole-wise beneath it, the bent shoulders, the eager, searching face drew many a hard countenance to the window, lifted many a greasy cap as Mr. Molesay's quick, kindly eyes glanced this way and that, missing nobody, yet forcing attentions on none.

The Knifer, going toward "Blind Jacob's" with a harmless-looking package in brown wrapping paper, knew as well that the little city missionary would not stop him, as Jock Cockpen, leather aproned to the chin, and all a smutty grin above, was certain

that he would pop in and confide a feeble white palm, with long fingers that trembled a little, into Smith Jock's big bear's-paw grip. For already the silver-headed little man was on Jock's trail. He knew he had been often in doubtful society of late. But for all that, he never once "let on" to Jock that he did not consider him the shining example of all his Bible Class.

"How d'ye do, Master Molesay?" cried Ashbucket Moll. "And a blessin' is what I ask from your riverence!"

Moll was a Catholic, and, as usual with her at this hour, partly in liquor.

"I am no 'reverence,'" said Mr. Molesay, stopping and smiling, "and I am not of your faith. You must go to Father McAinsh for your blessing!"

"*And* a good man!" said Moll, stoutly, balancing herself—her back burden of old clouts, cabbage hearts, and cigar ends shedding a mild but quite perceptible fragrance around—"a good man and a good priest, sir! But your riverence is the Howly Pether av them all, bless your nice frosty poll! Ye are at it night *an'* day, Sunday *an'* Saturday! No chick nor child have ye, but only us. And if they won't let ye into Paradise for a saint—account o' bein' a Protestant born—faith, then *I* won't go neither! No, not a fut—nor anny good Kyatholic in the Cowgate! Sorra a one, sorr! They may whistle for us. We will come along down there wid you, that we will. An' maybe that will shame thim up there wid their kays an' their harps an' their howly wather!"

"Thank you—thank you!" said Mr. Molesay, smiling, for he knew the genuine, even when it spoke with gin loading its breath.

"And now, your riverence—the blissin', an' let poor ould Ashbucket Moll be goin'!"

"I wish you would not call me that!" said Mr. Molesay, gently; "Father McAinsh might not like it, and I have no claims!"

"Maybe ye have never been promothed to be a bishop—though it's the fine man ye wud look in the purple an' goold yoursilf, sorr—entoirely. But it's the heart that make us riverend or unriverend. And by the powers, it's archbishop kyardinal ye should be, sorr! And ye will never let a poor ould sinful woman go without a wurrd or two o' the howly Latin! It'll do me good, sorr. I'll not touch a dhrop this day after ye have blessed poor ould two fathom o' soapsuds, that's not long for this wurrld. Say the prayer, sorr—in the howly Latin!"

Mr. Molesay, eager as ever to meet each soul with its appropriate medicine, said sharply, "If I do, then you promise on your immortal hope that you will not taste another drop before Saturday night!"

He knew it was useless to bargain for more.

"Never a dhrop—shall pass thim lips, on the hope of mercy!" cried Moll, eagerly.

Mr. Molesay blushed a little, and glanced every way to see that none observed them too closely.

"This calling of mine brings me precious near lying sometimes!" he murmured. And lifting up his right hand—for he knew that Moll would hold his best blessings of no account without that—he mumbled hurriedly, and with a straying eye, the Lord's Prayer in Greek—a relic of Professor Blackie's class room.

Poor old Moll would have dropped on her knees, but Mr. Molesay was already making off. She seized his hand and pressed it fervently to her lips.

"God in heaven's best blessings on you for your kindness to a poor ould drucken woman," she cried, "and in the howly Latin too!"

"What a deceitful wretch I am!" said Mr. Molesay to himself, as he hurried off in the direction of Number Seven Hagman's Close. "But after all, what is a man to do? I leave it to Rodgers himself to say!"

There was a quiet little family party in full swing, when, after having knocked in vain, Mr. Molesay

pushed open the door of Number Seven, and entered the habitation.

The Kid had been crying. The tears, as they followed the same channels down his cheeks, had gradually hollowed out the subsoil according to the latest geologic theory about denudation. The mapping of the country was the more accurate, because the Kid had not been able to rub his eyes with his knuckles, as is the habit of gamins of his age when suffering under the lash.

Mad Mag had shut him up for two days in the coal cellar, in the absence of the Knifer, for refusing to take her to "Blind Jacob's," where she suspected her husband to be. She had tied his hands together at the wrist with a cord, and passed that over a pulley in the ceiling after the manner of Mrs. Brownrigg with her unfortunate apprentices. But at the critical moment the Knifer had come home, and with one slash of the weapon from which he got his name, he had cut down the Kid. Then quite coolly, but with the wicks of his mouth drawn far down, and his lips making a mere crack in cast metal, he had bidden his wife to prepare for what he had promised her.

Then Mad Mag clung about the Knifer's knees, crying, "Oh, dinna kill me! Oh, dinna, dinna! I was only pretendin'. Dinna kill me, Knifer! It was only because I wanted to ken where ye were!"

She was sobbing and crying with the wild abandon of such women, kissing the Knifer's boots, tearing her hair, knocking her head on the floor, when the door softly opened, and, gently as the rising of the morn, the silver head and soft green hat of Mr. City Missionary Molesay dawned upon that sordid scene.

CHAPTER VII

PATRICIA'S BURGLARS

THE Knifer did not kill her, but Mad Mag had the lesson of her life. On the other hand, the Knifer did not reform and become a shining example to the flock ever after. Still, no one said a word against little Mr. Molesay, the city missionary, in his presence. As for the Kid, he had made a friend. And soon he knew the way, not only to the mission premises, where he helped to cut up bread and butter, but also to the plain bare apartments, sitting-room and bedroom, of the missionary himself. It was a long while before Mr. Molesay "talked good" to the Kid. He preferred rather just to let him dodge round and pick up ideas.

The Knifer had been busy of late. The "job" with young Duffus, of the red tie, had been carried out to everyone's satisfaction—except, perhaps, that of the person chiefly concerned—the passive resister, as it were—the man whose safe had been broken into.

Now a longer and more difficult affair was being prepared. The Kid had his first intimation of it one morning just as he was starting out to go to "Blind Jacob's." The Knifer had lain still in his bed that morning, and ordered his now exceedingly obedient wife to bring him his breakfast there.

"Kid," he said presently, "we are going to do a bit of a journey to-day—you and me and Corn Beef Joe. So stay in the house till I want you!"

From that command, of course, there was no appeal. Therefore the Kid stayed, and employed himself in polishing up the special set of tools, which the Knifer referred to generally as his "bag-o'-tricks." But equally, of course, the Kid kept speculating where he was going and what he would have to do. He had heard of boys being sent down chimneys, and getting roasted—of their being shot, torn by dogs, and maltreated by cruel serving men. These were the bogey tales current in "St. Jacob's," in which the influence of the memoirs of a certain Mr. Oliver Twist —who, rightly or wrongly, was considered in the college as a "soft"—could distinctly be traced. These were to be bought for a sixpence, but it was the "classy" thing to slip a copy off the counter into one's pocket while asking the price of a two-shilling Bible. Humour was thus delightfully mingled with business training, a combination much approved by the "St. Jacob's" faculty.

There were many severely worn prints in the usual sixpenny edition of this classic, but these had no success. Duffus, of the red tie, who was dainty in his apparel, and fared sumptuously—at other people's expense—every day, said that he would be hanged if he would show up with such a set of sickening toads as Charley Bates and his friends. He turned the points of his stand-up collar to the proper angle as he spoke, and then with a pink-bordered silk handkerchief flicked some grains of dust from his patent-leather, buttoned boots. His opinion was much quoted and approved in "Blind Jacob's," while the childishness of "fossicking" round, and "boosting" wretched "wipes" out of tail-coat pockets, was much commented on. It might do for Glasgow, but—Lor' bless you, at "St. Jacob's," in the acquisition of property, they could show you a trick worth two of that.

It was to this book—the Knifer's copy, with the pages about the death of Mr. W. Sykes carefully torn

out—that the Kid presently betook himself, when he had made each tool a different-shaped mirror. He wanted instructions how to behave when thrust through a cellar window at midnight.

But the Knifer's methods were up to date, and had nothing really suspicious about them. The Kid was dressed carefully in a little ready-made navy-blue suit, which appeared mysteriously upon the Knifer's moving his hand in the direction of the top of the wardrobe, which was also used as a cupboard. The Kid's mother brought down a parcel done up in brown paper, with the utmost precautions, and this, disembowelled by the Knifer's ready instrument, disgorged the Kid's first new complete suit.

But there was no gladness in it. He knew very well that he had to be shot in the shoulder with it on, and so all the gladness was but funeral-baked meats to him. McGhie's Kid was a melancholy boy as he and Knifer, each with a mourning band to their hard "bowler" hats, and the Kid with an extra crape about his left arm, walked to the railway station, openly in the heart of the day. The Knifer nodded to several police inspectors as he went. It was evident that neither of them were on business, for their reefer jackets were buttoned so tight that there was no room for even the smallest of "jemmies" to be hidden beneath.

They took tickets boldly for Glasgow, the Knifer speaking in a loud tone so that a robustious man with a beard and the regulation "clumpers" on his feet —police boots—might be able to hear.

"How balmy!" said the Knifer, as he dropped into a seat, having watched the plain-clothes man go off in the direction of the telegraph office; "how particularly balmy!"

As they regaled themselves with an illustrated paper apiece, their friend of the boots strolled negligently by to assure himself that the two had actually taken their places in the Glasgow train.

"All serene!" said the Knifer, under his breath, as he cut into an apple with his tobacco blade. "All those Glasgow coppers' fault if they miss us now! Can't pick up a scent even when the straight tip is given them—report to Henderland, and go to sleep with a good conscience! Have a bit of apple, Kid?"

But the Knifer did not complete his journey to the metropolis of the West. Midway he changed hastily at a quiet junction, and boarded a south-going train. Curiously enough, too, the door of the compartment opened of itself to receive him, and the next moment he was hauling up the Kid after him. When the door was shut, and the Kid had time to look about him, he found there was another man in the compartment besides Knifer Jackson. He was a tall, bony, fierce-looking fellow, with reddish hair, which would have been bristly if it had not been cut so short that it looked rather like the dust of some barber's shop that had been blown accidentally against a bald man's pate than proper hair grown on a proper head.

This man's name, it soon appeared, was Corn Beef Joe, owing to a tale of his, about which he was continually being teased, that he had once assisted at the packing of that article, and could swear that it was all dead horse. In some lights Joe looked so like a horse himself, that he was accused of cannibalism, and "Tinned Horse" was used sometimes as a variant of his better-known name.

But you needed to be something, or rather, a great deal of a fighter, indeed, before you dared to jest with "Corn Beef" about his cognomen.

"Joseph Mitchelson is my name," he would say, closing a fist like a fair-sized parcel-post packet of bones, covered with chapped skin, "and I'll drive that in the face of the man that calls me anything else!" The Kid was very careful to call this gentleman "Mr. Joseph Mitchelson" at full length, till the Knifer

told him that, being among friends, the gentleman would be content with "Joe," quite short.

So in this fashion they travelled on for some hours. At two several junctions they changed again into side trains, always in haste and always keeping to the right. It was after the final change, when the men were beginning to look out of the windows oftener as if to see how far they had got on their way, that Knifer Jackson beckoned the Kid over to him from his corner seat, at which he had been seated all day, drinking in the landscape as it whirled past at varying speeds—the foreground waltzing briskly with the telegraph poles, the middle distance sailing majestically behind like dowagers doing duty in the Roger de Coverley, the far-away hills serenely regardant, like spectators in the gallery.

"Kid," said Knifer Jackson, "ye ken what for ye are here?"

"Aye," said the Kid, suddenly struck down to the dismal earth, "to get shot through the shoother!"

"Nonsense!" said the Knifer, hastily; "there's none of that nowadays. Listen! At the place we are comin' to there's a big house, and in that house there's a rich old rascal whose money does no good to anybody. To-day he will be busy gettin' in his rents, and by the time he has them finished and the receipts written he will be ower late to bank the money. The servants at his house are at the seaside with the family. There will be nobody in the big house but the fat man and his housekeeper. He will dine—that is, take his dinner—at seven exact. The housekeeper will wait on him. The rent money will be left locked in the safe in his study, as he calls it. Then what you have to do, Kid, is just this: Opposite the door of the dining room there is a big cupboard, and the door is back in a recess. You are to walk right in at the front door of the house, and wait in the hall till ye hear folk talkin'. That will be the housekeeper servin' the rich old sinner with his dinner.

Then up along the passage wi' you! The carpet's thick, and your feet will never be heard. There will be not a soul to see you, with the housekeeper busy servin' dinner. Then into the cupboard as if ye were divin' into water. And through the crack ye will see all that is goin' on. As long as the two go on servin' and eatin'—do nothing. Joe and me will be busy with our own affairs upstairs. But if the rich old fellow rises to come upstairs before he has had his cup o' coffee and washed his fingers in a glass bowl, give three knocks on the big brass gong that hangs on a stand just outside the cupboard, and bolt out at the front door! Mind and keep to the left, close by the wall—the rest of the grass will be wired!"

The Kid nodded as Knifer Jackson slowly told off point by point his instructions. The routine was quite familiar to him, thanks to his course of instruction at "Blind Jacob's." The object was, of course, not his business. He would have no share in that, and he felt no pity for the rich old hunks who was sitting hatching out his rents in a lonely house. Mr. Molesay's instructions had not yet worked so far in. Deep-soil ploughing had, as one might say, yet to be begun with the Kid.

They disembarked at a station. Something familiar struck the Kid, but in the hurry of the moment he could not say what it was. But a horse in a yellow van, holding down its head with a tired look, seemed somehow not unknown, likewise a step to an omnibus which had been twisted and mended on the skew.

His head was still spinning with the fast travel, or he would have recognised his native town, even before Bob Cochrane, the big, hale porter, went along the carriages, crying "Kirkmessan—Kirk-messan! Passengers change here for Cauld Kill, Caulder, Shiverton, AND Portnessock!"

This is curious, but a fact. You see it was the first time that the Kid had ever travelled by rail,

which has a singularly mixing effect upon the young; besides which the Kid was not thinking that one could get from Hagman's Close to Kirkmessan by rail in a day. *He* had trudged it weary foot, taking weeks and weeks to do it in.

Then all at once he had a lightning stroke. The rich old man with the rents could be no one else but Mr. Brydson McGhie, Patricia's father—also Marthe's—therefore the owner of the garden house, where he had been tended and cured, where he had had a real college doctor to attend him, and nobody the wiser. No, he could not do this thing. But how to help it?

He saw Gregg's boy. Ah! now he remembered—it was the baker's white horse he had seen holding low its weary head between the shafts and breathing on the ground between its feet. Gregg's boy had been no great friend of his, but very likely he would have forgotten him. The Kid was now well dressed, and had on a mourning band and a new hard hat. He would never be taken for Kid McGhie of the Back Mill Lands. He searched his pockets for the shilling the Knifer had given him that morning.

Slipping off a moment while Knifer Jackson and Corn Beef Joe were busy with their "luggage," he ran to Gregg's boy.

"Hae," he said, shoving the shilling into his hand, "run to McGhie's big hoose—Balmaghie they caa' it—as hard as ye can. See McGhie himsel', and bid him to run quick to the bank wi' his rent money——"

He got no time to say more, for Corn Beef Joe had him by the shoulder and was leading him past the ticket collector, in whom, with another shock, he recognised a soft-faced boy called "Soda Bannocks," whom he had often stoned for that very reason.

However, he saw Gregg's boy, after looking about him and scratching his head awhile, suddenly jump on the box of the old dusty van and whip up the white horse to an excited and spasmodic three-legged trot

in the direction of the eligible suburban residence of P. Brydson McGhie, Esq., J.P.

The Kid watched Gregg's boy out of sight, and then drew a long breath.

"I'm a 'split,'" he said, sighing, "but it was for yon lass's sake!"

"Yon lass" meant Patricia McGhie—her and no other.

The voice of Joe, the "Tinned Horse," awoke him startlingly. "What were you saying to that boy when I came up?" he demanded.

"I was askin' him at what time the banks closed here," he answered, "and if they took siller after hours."

The Knifer laughed commendingly.

"That's right, Kid," he said, nodding his head; "always try to do a little business on your own account. But I fear you will have to leave the Kirkmessan banks for another time. But I say—what ambition these young shavers have got! It's 'Blind Jacob's' that does it!"

"There's no other way to get on!" acknowledged the "Tinned Horse" solemnly.

. . . . .

"Good evening, gentlemen!" said a clear voice in nett decided tones, with a ring of laughter in them, when Knifer Jackson and his friend Corn Beef Joe penetrated into the "study" of Balmaghie, the eligible—and so forth—residence of P. Brydson McGhie, Esq., J.P.

They halted on the threshold of the study, dumb struck.

"Come in—come in!" said the voice. "Make yourselves at home!" A tall, black-haired, handsome girl, with merry eyes and decided features, was seated on a table strewn with papers—P. Brydson McGhie's own sacred work table. She held a blue-covered pass book in her hand, and swung her legs carelessly

to and fro, the table being rather a high one to suit Mr. McGhie's business armchair.

"Come straight in, without wiping your feet, just as if the house was your own," said Miss Patricia, calmly; "I am rather out of breath, you see. I've just been down to the bank with father's rents. I suppose it was about that you called. You want to pay yours, Mr.—ah, I forget your name. But really I can't take it to-day. Shop's closed, shutters up. Come to-morrow!"

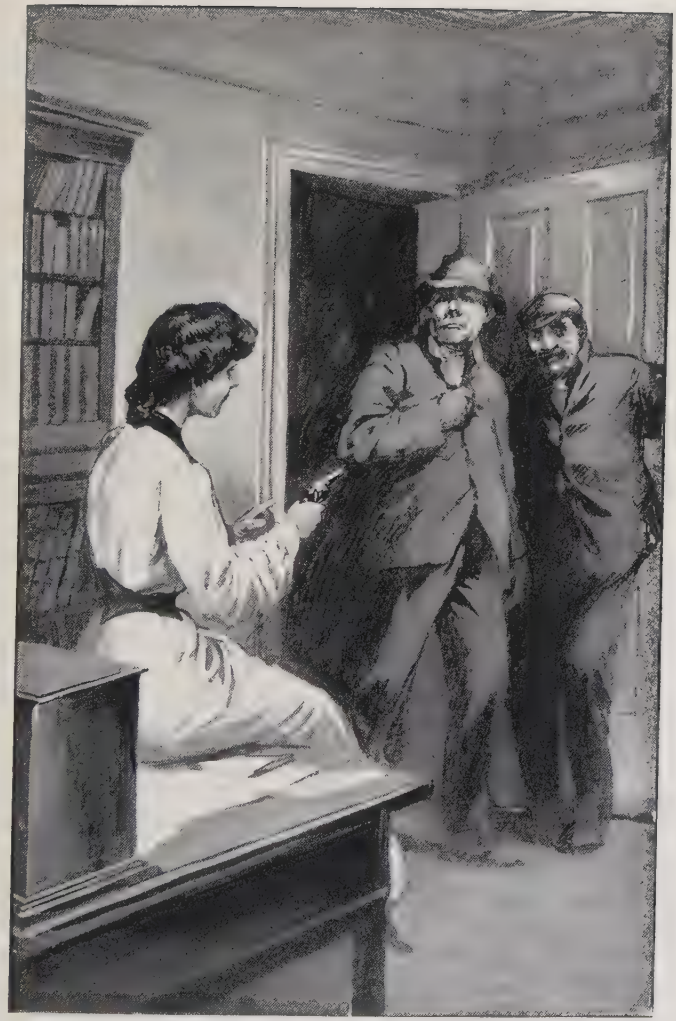
Knifer stood gazing solemnly at the girl who thus confronted two princes of burglary with gay carelessness. He could admire and understand that. The "Tinned Horse," after his kind, could do neither.

"See, miss," he said, "we are not here for any lip, nor yet to bandy words hither and across, but to get the money, and the money we must have! We know that your father has not had the time to put it in the bank!"

"No, *he* hadn't," said Pat, with far less fear than a more advised girl would have felt in her situation, "but *I* did it for him. *I* ran through the plantation, and got back here just in time to bid you welcome to Balmaghie, gentlemen. See, here is the bank book. It was after hours, but the clerks were balancing, and Mr. Macduff is a friend of mine—or would like to be—so he took the money, and signed for it readily enough. You can look for yourselves. The ink is hardly dry yet. But you can have my Waterbury watch, and all I have in my pockets. It's only about three and sixpence—gloves come dreadfully expensive when you like them with four buttons——"

"That's enough, shut up!" said Corn Beef Joe, black with wrath at being foiled. "See here, young lady, you may think you are very clever; but if we don't get the money, or something worth our time and expense, it will be the worse for you!"

"Ah, so—" said Pat McGhie, "now, that's not



"NICE GUN, ISN'T IT, GENTLEMEN?"

polite. And I don't think the other gentleman will uphold you in that, but, just in case——"

She stretched out her right hand very slightly to a pigeon hole, and lifted her father's revolver. It was a Webley, and reliable.

"Nice gun, isn't it, gentlemen?" she said, toying with it. "Continuous fire, self-ejector pattern, blunt-nose bullets, warranted dum-dum, excellent stopping power. My brother Gilbert taught me to use it last holidays down in the glen."

And she cocked the weapon with a knowing overlift of her thumb, familiar to the initiated.

"Nice easy trigger too. Gilbert eased it for me to help my scoring. I can put all six in a watch case at fifteen yards—that's lady's distance, you know."

The Knifer laughed suddenly aloud. Something had stirred his sense of humour.

"Hands up, Joe," he said; "she takes us. And Lor', it's worth it! I never saw a girl like you."

"No more did I!" said Pat McGhie. "I've often remarked as much myself."

"But now," said the Knifer, "now you've got us here, and the door shut, what do you mean to do with us? Not the police, eh? 'Cause we would have to make a rush for it then, Webleys or not!"

"Any more of you?" said Pat, easily, as if she could have undertaken all "St. Jacob's."

"Only a little 'un below," said the Knifer; "a boy, in the cupboard opposite the dining-room door, wonderin' what the mischief is up."

Never a muscle of Pat McGhie's face betrayed that she was not surprised at what she heard. The youth from Gregg's had described the small sturdy boy in the bowler hat with the mourning band round his arm. But, of course, that had conveyed nothing to her as to the identity of her friend and ally.

"Well," said Patricia, "I don't know that there's much in the house you would care about. All the folk—and all the silver—are down at the seaside.

But if you will let bygones *be* bygones—why, I'll see what I can do for you in the way of supper. And as your bags look somewhat heavy, I'll drive you over to the station in time for the late train back to town—the boat train, you know."

Knifer Jackson burst into another approving chuckle of laughter.

"Well, if you aren't a fair good plucked one," he said. "I've seen some in my time, but never one that could sit there picking her teeth and holding up a couple of first-flight classy 'breakers'! Oh, *what* would they say at 'Blind Jacob's'?"

"If my sister Marthe had been at home," said Patricia, with a little smiling toss of her pretty black head, "she would have talked to you properly, I daresay—shown you what bad, *bad* men you were, and all that. But I suppose you know. At any rate, you didn't come down here to be told, did you?"

"Well," said the Knifer, grinning, "I think we can get on without the sermon!"

"Oh, *I* won't bother you," said Pat McGhie, swinging herself to the ground. "I'll feed you, though! Where's the little one you spoke about?"

The Knifer opened the door and called up the astonished Kid, who came trembling, not knowing what might await him in the study.

"Well, young 'un," said Patricia, not the quiver of an eyelash revealing that she recognised her former patient of the garden house, "you have made a nice start in life. But never mind, you won't be any the worse of a good supper. Here," she cried, suddenly tossing the revolver on the shelf, "I can't cook a supper with deadly weapons getting into the frying pan. Look me in the eye, you three. Now, I have dispensed with my revolver, and have no weapon concealed about my person more deadly than a hairpin. So pile your armoury behind the door there, if you please."

"We have nothing but a knife apiece," said the

hero of that weapon, drawing his renowned blade. Sulkily, Joe produced his. Patricia glanced at them without in the least knowing what historical weapons she was privileged to look upon.

"Oh, those little things!" she said, carelessly; "better keep them for slicing the ham. Besides, I am not sure how much of the kitchen cutlery we shall find unlocked, and we may need to eat with these and our fingers. We will just have to scratch for it. You see you did not send me word you were coming."

And with these words, she turned her back on the astonished three and marched downstairs into the kitchen. In a few minutes she had Knifer set to slicing bacon. Joe was lighting the fire—which, like himself, was sulky—while the Kid cut and buttered bread as fast as his arms would work. Patricia superintended, occasionally rattling bottles in the cellar, and every now and then skipping in upon them to see that they kept steadily to their work.

The Knifer, with the pleasantest lurking smile upon his lips that the Kid had ever seen there, regarded Joe. He felt the need of winking at somebody in a confidential manner, but finding Joe still morose, he bestowed it upon the Kid, who beamed with pleasure. Somehow his message *viâ* Gregg's boy had turned out for the best, for all parties concerned—if even the Knifer appeared pleased.

It was a meal never to be forgotten. Patricia, a rose in her dark hair to do honour to the occasion, and a jest even for stubborn Joe, sat at the head of the table and passed the viands. The servants' cutlery was found to be indeed locked up, but with a condescending twinkle the Knifer himself stepped to the drawer which Patricia was shaking with a pretty, pettish spite. He drew something from his pocket.

"*Click!*" Metal just touched metal. No more—and yet the drawer was open.

"Why," cried Patricia, indignantly, "you had the key in your pocket all the time and never told me!"

Which appeared so funny to the sombre Joe of the "Tinned-Horse" visage, that he *haw-hawed* out loud, touched for the first time by the humour of the feast. Altogether it was gay, and the Knifer sang "My Pretty Jane" with many quaint, old-fashioned gestures.

"It's rather like Sims Reeves' style, I've been told"—then he added, candidly, "*heard through a telephone*, I mean!"

"And, now, gentlemen," said Patricia, "I must leave you to lock up the cutlery and wash the dishes. There's nothing in the house I can offer you for a souvenir, unless you each take a marble timepiece. Everything is at the seaside or at the bank. Most unfortunate, isn't it? This young man and I will go and yoke up the dogcart, and I'll have you at the station in ten minutes."

It says something for the Knifer and his influence over men and things that he actually kept Joe of the "Tinned Horse" from turning the house topsy-turvy, and even from swearing during Patricia's absence.

"The girl's a marvel," he said. "She has treated us square, and so we've got to toe the line also. Get on with the washing up of these dishes, Joe, d'ye hear?"

Out in the yard Pat whispered hurriedly to the Kid:

"Your father—your mother's husband, I mean? Can't you get away? We could easily find you a place. Of course I won't tell you sent me word by that baker lad! I was just in time. Five hundred and thirty pounds—well, there's one gold sovereign for you—all I've got. I'm always on the rocks somehow! Anyway, you come here, and I'll find you something to do. *Stand over* there, will you, Dumple, you silly old thing!—I'm not a nosebag!"

"Good night—good-bye!" she called to the men,

who had asked to be deposited in the shadow behind the big bridge out of the range of the station incandescents. "Glad Dumple put some pace into it to-night in your honour. Glad you enjoyed it."

She checked herself on the point of saying "Come again soon!" and laughed instead.

The Knifer stood and looked long after the vanishing lights of the swift dogcart till he could no longer see the lithe, erect silhouette of the driver.

"Well," he said, slowly, "if I had been a swell, which I ain't—if I had been a young fellow, which I ain't—if I had been a single man, which I ain't—if I had been an *honest* man, which I ain't—that's the girl I would ha' married! That—and no other!"

But Joe of the horse face trudged, dogged and sullen, within the white gates of the station, while the Kid, very wide-eyed, wondered.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PEDIGREE MAN

When the Kid got home that night, under the escort of his stepfather, having at the same wayside junction parted from Joe of the "Tinned Horse," it was late. The house was lit up, seeing which the Knifer arched his eyebrows and cocked his ears as he came upstairs, holding by the stanchioned rope, which slid greasily through his fingers.

Mrs. "Knifer" Jackson entertained friends unawares. She had not expected her husband home that night. They could hear the voice of Mad Mag singing, and at that sound the Kid shivered. It recalled many memories of the bad old days at Kirkmessan, and something, too, of his father. And there was a lingering sweetness about that in spite of the fear and the pain. Mad Mag had half killed him, it is true, but—he had never had a cross word from his father.

The Knifer pushed the door of his dwelling open with a cautious art which had long become instinctive. It consisted in carrying the door forward to the verge of the first creak swiftly and without hesitation—then stepping back. But, though the action was instinctive, only experience of the particular door will teach you where it begins to creak.

Mad Mag was seated on one side of the table, a tall cut-glass tumbler, partly filled, before her, while a young man, who looked like a cross between a groom and an undertaker, sat opposite to her.

The Knifer conveyed his hand to his side pocket where his knife abode. His face was exceedingly unpleasant to see.

"Well?" he said, glowering down upon the pair, and upon the bottles and glasses on the table between them, "didn't expect me so soon, eh?"

"Oh, Knifer!" cried Mad Mag, instantly sobered —as since that day in the Hunter's Bog she always was by the steady regard of her husband—"this is Alf—my brother, Alf Caigton. He's doing well in the historical line. He's just come in to see me—all on account o' David McGhie, the Kid's own father, and family affection and old times!"

"Ah," said the Knifer, dryly, "how d'ye do, Mr. Alf Caigton—glad to meet you, though you did drop in awkward, and things might a' turned out a bit different! But all's well that ends well. Kid, here's your uncle!"

But the Kid, with instinctive dislike, edged off. He would have nothing to say on any terms to the brother of his mother, Mr. Alf Caigton, who, by his sister's telling, was "doing so well in the historical business."

"Ye see," Mag went on, "Alf's the clever one. He had more schoolin' than all the rest o' us put together, and I'm not sayin' that he has misused it. Not that he's ever done anything for his brothers and sisters—but he's always done well for himself —oh, remarkable well!"

"That's to his credit, anyway!" said the Knifer.

"Isn't it?" said Mag, with a sisterly pride, "an' the only one o' us as has!"

"Square—*or* on the crook, Mr. Alf?" asked the Knifer, reaching out for the bottle, but without sitting down.

"Straight!" said Mr. Alf Caigton, "only a curious kind o' straight!"

"U-m-m-m! Yes!" said the Knifer, suddenly letting himself drop into a chair, "I've seen them

sort o' straights afore. There's mostly something crooked aback o' them. Well, out with it, young fellow—what's your little lay ? "

" Oh, I'll tell you," said Mr. Alf Caigton, tugging at one of his sandy whiskers, which he wore to give him a look of greater age than he possessed in the registrar's books of Kirkmessan. " I'm in the pedigree business ! "

" And what's that ? " said the Knifer, looking at his brother-in-law over the top of his empty glass —" sort o' Burke-an'-Hare lay—slug the people first and look up their pedigrees after ! Nice, pleasant, light work to apprentice a lad o' spirit to, eh ? "

Mr. Alf Caigton smiled wanly. It appeared that he had a similar fear of his redoubtable brother-in-law to that which pressed upon the spirits of his sister. " Oh, no, how funny ! " (He said " fanny.") " You have such a flow of spirits, Mr. Jackson ! "

And he laughed heartily enough, but somehow the sound did not seem to come quite from the right place. The Knifer looked him over, and mentally arranged that, if Mr. Alf Caigton's business was at all lucrative, he should have his " whack " out of it. He knew men with laughs like that.

It could not be called a very roisterous party at Mad Mag's that night. Everybody was more or less uncomfortable—except the Knifer, that is, who was calculating how much Alf Caigton should stand him in, in the course of a fairly successful twelvemonth.

First of all, however, he wished to be posted up.

" Tell us the truth, mind—the icy truth about this pedigree biz," he said, " and how much you make of it."

" It's like this," said Mr. Alf Caigton ; " I can do a good bit with the pen——"

" All you've got to do is to put a hand-o'-write before our Alf," interposed his proud sister, " the signin' of a man's name, or anything like that. And with a pen in his hand, in two minutes he will have it

copied that exact—why, the man won't know the difference himself. It's been tried ! "

" I daresay it has," remarked the Knifer, grimly. " It's just the sort o' accomplishment that wouldn't be let rust in a fambly like yours ! But what has that to do with pedigrees ? "

" Oh, just this," said Alf, willing to clear himself from the aspersions which a sister's too eager pride had caused to be cast upon his commercial integrity. " I take too precious good care o' my skin to risk fourteen year for forgery—a few years since it would have been something else——"

" Ah," said the Knifer, fumbling at his necktie as if he found it tight, " the risks o' *that* are now confined to my business. It keeps it more selec' ! "

" Yuss," said Mr. Alf Caigton, " I've been in England a lot, an' in one place my handwriting got me made secretary to a library, where there were piles an' piles of old writings, some of them near to five hunder year old. And you wouldn't believe the ugly fists they wrote, and the shameful way they spelt. Now my girl had given me the heave that year, and I wasn't doing much—took no interest in going out, you see. I never was a drinkin' man——"

" No, I see that," said the Knifer, looking at the low-tide mark in the rum bottle.

" I wasn't speakin' about my sister," said Mr. Alf, who had followed the direction of the Knifer's eyes.

His brother-in-law nodded approvingly. He might have fear tingling up and down his backbone, this pedigree man—thought the burglar—but, at any rate, he was no fool. So much the better. He would earn more.

" Perceed ! " said Knifer Jackson. And the tale-teller went on.

" It's like this," he began again, as if from the beginning. " I learned to read and to write the rubbish, so as you couldn't tell the old from the new —parchments chemically prepared, loads of the stuff

inside the covers of old books. They stuffed them like pillows in them days. Well, what I do now is to find a joker who has had the 'oof-bird come perchin' on his rooftree, but hasn't any more family in particular than a stray lurcher dog. *Then* what does he want ? Why, nine times out o' ten—pedigree ! "

" Well, Mr. Jackson, sir," (here Mr. Alf rolled a cigarette with an important air which seemed to amuse the Knifer hugely), " it cannot have escaped the observation of a man like you, that anything you want in this world can be had for money ! And a pedigree is no exception ! None, sir, none—I assure you. You can have it countersigned by a Lord Munster King-at-Arms. You can have engravings done in his widely circulated ' Visits to Armorial Houses.' You can have the lives of your progenitors writ, and if they was hanged, sir, you can have the documents altered to say that they died at Cressy an' Waterloo fightin' for their king, with fifteen French spears buried in their manly bosoms ! We sugar it to taste, sir, an' the charge is naturally accordin' ! "

The Knifer nodded, watching all the while with eager interest. There seemed, after all, something in the thing. But what brought such a top-sawyer as Mr. Alf to the humble home of a plain, centre-bit " breaker " like the Knifer ? *That* had still to be explained.

" Yes," continued Alf Caigton, now thoroughly at his ease in an atmosphere of what he took for admiration, " it goes on four wheels, once you get a name for it. One party recommends you to another as a sure man and a good investigator. Now, I've got the chief of a clan on, no less—a regular smasher——"

" What's his ber-loomin' clan ? " said the Knifer, scornfully.

" McGhie is his name," said Mr. Alf, and then watching the swift alteration on his brother-in-law's face, he added, hastily, " and, indeed, it's on that account that I am here. It appears that my man

is some far-out relative of David McGhie, that boy's father, and that there were certain papers in the old house at Back Mill Lands which would help me. This McGhie fool wants to be chief o' the name! Ha, ha! And he'd pay good money for the papers. They were in an old black box. I have the description here."

He foraged in his breast pocket, and from a mass of scribbled notes and nondescript material he produced a memorandum from which he read as follows: "A small black oaken box, clasped with iron, about one foot nine every way, shaped like a tea chest; nothing in it but papers!"

"I opened it with the coal axe the night before I left," cried Mad Mag, "and there was nothing in it but papers, as he says. I kicked it to the back of the garret. And it's there yet. As far as I'm concerned ye are welcome to it, Alf!"

"But not as far as *I* am concerned," said the Kid, coming suddenly into the circle of illumination produced by the lamp on the table. "*I* am The McGhie. I am the chief of the name. Me and nae ither! And the papers are mine—*mine*—since my faither is killed deid!"

Even as one, the three faces were turned upon him. His mother's face wore a scowl of fury. And had she been alone with the Kid, it would have gone ill with The McGhie. The clan might have required a new head in very brief space indeed. Mr. Alf appeared all taken aback and dumbfounded. It was as if one had spoken from the dead. Only the Knifer's face wore a grin of malicious pleasure.

"Spoken like a man, young 'un!" he cried. "I like to see a man stick up for his rights. The papers are yours—not a doubt of it—and if we had but thought, a little earlier in the evening——"

But he cut off sharp here. For, after all, he did not know Mr. Alf, and the business which had given the Kid and himself the pleasure of Miss Patricia's

society in the town of Kirkmessan was of a very private nature indeed.

Mr. Alf smiled a "wersh" kind of smile, as cheerful as drizzling rain in November.

"We'll take you in, then," he said, "in on the ground floor too. I never meant anything else, of course. You and me will work as partners. For this McGhie pedigree, I have need of a smart boy to open the doors of church vestries where books are kept, to lose documents writ by me, where they will be found in the nick o' time—churchyards, too, where there are little alterations in the lettering of tombstones to be made—I attend to that myself at special rates. But I need a boy to look out and hold the lantern so as to suit the chisel! Now, if I mistake not, you're that boy! I will give him a man's wage, Mr. Jackson, and when all has passed the heralds' office, and my man pays me, I will give him a share of the take!"

"Very well said—most liberally and nobly said!" cried the Knifer, "but what about *me?*"

"You?" said Mr. Alf, taken very much aback.

"Yes, me!" said the Knifer, knocking his clenched fist on the table so that the bottles danced and the glasses dirled and sang against each other. "I have had the educating of that boy. I found him. I made something of him. He has been out with me at work this very day. He has my secrets. Such as they are, they might hang a man, or maybe two. I cannot let him go to another party without some reasonable compensation, can I? I put it to you as an honourable man and a fair man, Mr. Alf Caigton, is it likely that I will?"

"Well, if you put it that way," said Mr. Alf, "perhaps not! But a boy can't be worth much to the like of you—a famous man—a young boy that doesn't know anything almost. He's not worth much! And with me it would be all in the family, as it were!"

"Very like—not much to you!" said the Knifer,

" but to me he is worth gold—why, I picked him up—I trained him. What shall we say, Mr. Alf? Half of everything, for me and the Kid between us, that is? And the other full half for you? "

Mr. Alf rose to his feet, suddenly flushing hot. " I'll see you——" he began. But the Knifer was too quick for Mad Mag's brother, as, indeed, one of his profession and attainments would naturally be for a mere parchment fumbler. Something razor-keen and with a point to it pressed ever so gently against Mr. Alf's throat, while the Knifer's left hand twisted his jaw in an iron grasp.

" You have no objections, I think! " said the Knifer, softly. " Your sister will be on my side, I feel sure! *She knows me!* "

" Oh, Knifer, for mercy's sake—no bloodshed! " cried Mad Mag, so anxiously that her brother felt the sincerity in her tones, and knew that he was looking out over the uttermost verge of time. Ever after that he recognised eternity as a chill blue thing which buzzed.

" No, no! " he said. " So it shall be, then! Half for me and half for you."

But privately Mr. Alf meant to do some very solid lying with regard to his receipts.

" And mind, no juggling with the accounts," said the Knifer, as if reading his thoughts, " for you can't get it off—not safely. You see, the Kid and me are solid with Miss McGhie——"

" Patricia," interrupted the Kid.

" And we will find out to a farthing how much her father has paid you, Mr. Alf Pedigree-Hawker. And if there's a white sixpence not accounted for when we come to settle, you'll wish you had never been born! "

. . . . .

On the whole, the Kid liked pedigree work better than " Blind Jacob's." It was not that any moral

sense was awaking in him, so much as that he was ashamed, in the company among which he found himself at Mr. Molesay's mission rooms, to be thought to have anything to do with such a place.

The boys at Molesay's did not put on any "side." But somehow, without actual lying, the Kid began to deny his *alma mater*, and even, when he could hide it from the Knifer, to shirk going there at all. It was a much easier thing to say that his business was to go about and copy old inscriptions in churchyards. The question always followed, "And do they pay you for that?"

To which the Kid could say, "Oh, yes, a pound a week, sure!"

For that was the truth, and carried respect at the Cowgate Molesay Mission. Many full-grown men, carters and so forth, did not make as much. The Kid enjoyed the change in consideration exceedingly. The comment which always followed was this:

"Aye, they will be seekin' for hidden treasure, dootless—or maybe—provin' a wull!"

For the litigious Scot likes nothing so much as a wrangle over a disputed succession. So the reason and end of the Kid's curious trade were clear to them at once.

CHAPTER IX

THE HEIRESS ON PROBATION

It was about this time that Patricia became an heiress. Or if not an actual heiress, at least an heiress on trial. For her heiress-ship was conditional on her good behaviour. Marthe, who knew the young lady better than most, said that if *that* were the condition, she would never inherit. The thing, long pending, at last happened thus :

Patricia's mother's elder brother had been left with all the riches of the family. He had married a partner in life, carefully selected for the purpose. He had imbued her with the idea of the enormous importance of continuing the line of the Boreham-Eghams, but, so far, with nothing else. They were now two old people, childless, self-absorbed, vegetating in a large country house within twelve miles of Edinburgh.

The Boreham-Eghams prided themselves on having nothing Scotch about them. They went only to the English church. They frequented only the exclusively English society of the neighbourhood, and they had two old retainers in the very un-Scottish guise of housekeeper and—controller of the household. At least that is the word which most nearly expresses the fact.

Algernon Hammer and his wife had begun by being simply old servants. They were looking forward to a pension, and a " Boreham-Egham Arms " somewhere in the neighbourhood, when the increasing willingness of the old couple to be dictated to, and

their piteous appeals to Mrs. and Mr. Hammer to continue at their posts, unconsciously riveted the chains upon their aged necks.

After that, Egham Castle belonged to Mrs. and Mr. Hammer, and the quaintly preserved old couple upstairs never so much as ventured to give an order in their own names. It was, "Ask Hammer about this." Or, "I think it will be better before we go further to call in Mrs. Hammer—she is in the habit of looking to such matters for us!"

But it was the matter of the heirship that brought out the power of the Hammers most clearly. It had often been discussed, if one of the boys McGhie should not be brought from Balmaghie and invested with the name, the responsibilities, and the perquisites of the Boreham-Eghams.

But when Mr. Boreham-Egham had put this before his downstairs lords and masters, the Hammers had put the proposal out of court at once. It was simply not to be thought about. A boy, indeed! He would turn all the quiet establishment upside down. He would run over the grass. He could not be depended upon to wipe his feet upon the mat, even when his attention was called to the matter by a placard written in Mr. Hammer's own hand.

No, the Hammers were clear upon this point. Otherwise they would resign! A successor to the long De Boreham-Egham line—the article now dropped—must be found. But a girl, not a boy. On that the Hammers stood firm, and the sooner the two automata sitting upstairs—"starved atomies" Mr. Hammer called them, his own proportions being noways starved—realised that the better.

"You see, Marigh," he said, "it gives us a longer lease. A boy grows up—so does a girl, you say. Right, she does. But a boy grows up into a young man, goes to college, meets with other young men, becomes masterful, and then any day, *bang*, he may turn us out of house and home."

"But a girl might do just the same," said Maria Hammer, who did not approve of the younger members of her own sex.

"No—I beg your pardon, Marigh—I don't think you quite catch my point," said Mr. Hammer, who kept his brusque offensiveness for his master and mistress, "what I mean is this. We could persuade Master and Missus not to make the girl the actual heir of our estates, till such time as choice had been made of a suitable husband for the young person, Marigh! You understand?"

And Mr. Algernon Hammer, satisfied with his own proposition, squinted down at the purple gloss on his dyed side-whiskers, and smiled cunningly at Marigh.

"I can't say as I do," said his wife, tartly. She was a little skinny woman, with more knuckle bones and nobby places about her, visible to the naked eye, than should have been allowed out of an anatomical museum.

Patricia called her the Æolian harp at first sight, "because the wind would most assuredly whistle through her—or if it did not, then the wind did not know its business."

"Well, then," said Mr. Hammer, shutting the eye which had examined the noble tapering copying-ink cone attached to his left cheek, and squinting down the other side at its equally perfect neighbour, "I will explain, Marigh, my dear."

"If you would not look so like a blessed Shanghai rooster which has choked itself trying to part its tail down the centre, perhaps you might be able to do it easier," interrupted his wife.

"I will explain," said Mr. Hammer, imperturbably. "The young lady——"

"Person," said Mrs. Hammer; "we will call her 'person,' if you please, till we see how she is going to behave herself!"

"'Person,' then," amended Hammer, his hand travelling unconsciously up to his favourite left cone.

"This young person would no doubt attract many suitors, *our* estates being large and not involved, thanks to our fostering care. A proper selection would need to be made. Now, Marigh, who do you think is to make that selection?"

"Why," said Mrs. Hammer, "I suppose in these days, when there is no respect for authority, as there was when I was young, the—ah—person would expect to choose for herself."

"Not a bit of it," cried Controller Hammer triumphantly. "Not a single bit. Why, it 'ud be us—you an' me, Marigh-yah!" And he slapped his wife on the back.

"I wish you would keep your great paviers' jumpers to yourself!" said Marigh-yah tartly. "Say what you have got to say without slappin' me as if I were a horse you were 'come-over-ing' in the stable!"

Presently, however, she relented, and letting her curiosity get the better of her, said, "You've some idea, Hammer, I can see that. What is it? Out with it!"

"Well," said Hammer, slowly and almost reluctantly, for the idea, once shared, would never be quite his own again, "we-e-ll, Marigh, it's this. We have enough influence with old Pads-and-Puffs up there—you on your Fringe-Flannel-and-Slipper side, and me with old Stays-and-Chokers—to keep them from making the girl the heiress—till the prince consort, as one might say, is chosen! And then the man would be chosen that would pay us the biggest sum of cash down—no percentages on the dowry for yours truly—for all our trouble, AND the comfort of our declining years, eh, Marigh?"

Marigh rose and caressed the nearest tail of coal-black whisker with unwonted tenderness—a tenderness which she never manifested save in the immediate prospect of financial advantage.

"You *have* a nut, Algy," she said, affectionately, "I've always said it—you *have* a nut!"

Marigh—which was Mr. Hammer's way of pronouncing "Maria"—thought awhile, and then with a keen look at her husband, she added her rider.

"But," she said, "first of all we've got to choose the girl—the girl heiress. And I'll do the choosing. No hussies in this house, IF you please! When you want to pull your coal-black whiskers at anybody, Algernon Hammer, you pull them at me, understand?"

And Algernon Hammer, with a sigh, said that he did—fully.

. . . . .

Thus it came to pass that while the scandal of Patricia's unwarrantable behaviour in letting the burglars escape unpunished was still fresh in the minds of all the family of the McGhies (*i.e.*, the younger branch thereof), Mr. P. Brydson McGhie received a letter one morning at the seaside which set him pondering deeply and with reason.

It was no less than a communication from Mr. Philip Egbert Egham Boreham-Egham, of Egham Castle, his wife's only brother, saying—after the usual apologies for seeing so little of him and his interesting family—that it was his intention and that of his wife to leave all their estates—of considerable extent and value, even in these times, as Mr. McGhie knew—to one of his daughters, who, upon her marriage, would be required to take the name and style of Boreham-Egham. It would, therefore, in these circumstances give Mr. P. E. Egham Boreham-Egham great pleasure if, in order the better to carry out these intentions, which he had already communicated to his lawyer, the three young ladies—he was informed that there were three—would accept an invitation to visit Egham Castle at a date which would be convenient to them. Any time would suit Mr. and Mrs. Egham Boreham-Egham. They did not leave the castle except for the shortest possible periods.

This letter created great joy and satisfaction in the breasts of both Father and Mother McGhie. Egham Castle, and one of their daughters the heiress to it, was, indeed, a very different thing to "Balmaghie," with double turned commas. Patrick (J.P.) felt that these must be suppressed at once. Also the sooner that his pedigree could be put on a proper footing the better. So that same mail that bore the acceptance of the Egham Castle invitation carried a letter also to Mr. Alfred Caigton, armorial expert, late of Register Street, Edinburgh. The latter document was strictly private, but contained a wish to see Mr. Caigton "in this part of the country with all documents" as soon as might be convenient, and the sooner it was convenient the better worth Mr. Caigton's while Mr. P. Brydson McGhie would be inclined to make it.

"The McGhie" was rising in the world, and as chief of the clan and name, with a daughter heiress of Egham Castle, he did not see why even the long-dropped title of Earl McGhie should not be revived in the family.

"The Earl McGhie of Boreham and Egham" would certainly be a title worth taking to bed with one on winter nights. It was a pity, of course, that his relative, stupid old fossil that he was, had not chosen Gilbert or one of the boys. But he was one of those fussy old fellows whom it was no use trying to influence. He would have his own way. He had had it all his life, and if he wanted to adopt one of the girls, well, they were each of them, particularly and severally, at the disposal of Mr. P. E. Egham Boreham-Egham for the aforesaid purpose.

Such was the official view at Balmaghie, which was not even damped by a curious paragraph, added to the letter of invitation, apparently as an afterthought: "As both my wife and myself are in a somewhat precarious state of health, it will be better, if you think well of this, to fix times and seasons,

and make all the necessary arrangements, with Mr. Algernon Hammer, the controller of our household, for many years our faithful and attached servant."

But, even so, the White Waistcoat and the Brown Silk Sacque, trimmed with double ruching and passementerie, which between them represented the observance of the fifth commandment to the three McGhie girls, were perfectly satisfied. Evidently, with a controller of the household, all things were done decently and in order at Egham Castle.

Praise be to Allah! it would be a goodly heritage.

Such, as I have said, was the view official, that of the study where the rents were paid, complaints made, and loans adjusted, and of the large drawing-room to which visitors who did not know enough to ask specially for "the young ladies" were shown.

Far different was the reception of the news in the girls' parlour, in the schoolroom, the box room, and generally wherever the younger members of the Clan McGhie were gathered together. Exasperation ruled chiefly in the boys' minds.

"What," cried Bob, indignantly, "what would a pack of girls do with all those fine shootings and estates and wads of money and stacks of bank notes? Just give them to some other fellow, not her brother; indeed, very likely no sort of kin to her at all."

This was so many different kinds of shame, that Bob had finally to leave his brothers to do justice to the situation. His vocabulary gave out early. Gilbert proposed that they should go down to Egham in a body and interview "the old pigs." He referred to his uncle and aunt. But though there was a fine manly spirit about this proposal, there was also something which was not—not quite practical. "Besides," added the cunning Gilbert, after he had thought the thing over, "if Marthe married, it would be old Symington, you know, who could never fire a gun, not if the pheasants were rising as thick as sparrows in a barnyard."

Such a brother-in-law would be worth having. He would have all the swot of rearing the poultry, and then, as for the shooting, why, the McGhies, Marthe's brothers, would attend to that.

Atalanta was a more difficult case. She was evidently going to marry. Fellows were already inclined to "go silly" over Baby Lant. They had all noticed that. Why, in the holidays, there was Maurice Benson, the captain of the school, who made three figures against the West of Scotland, and all the three weeks he could never be got to do a single thing—only fetch cushions for Baby Lant. All because she had big blue eyes and was too lazy to live! Why, *they* had big blue eyes, too, at least Bob had, and they could be as lazy as any girl. But nobody went and waited hand and foot on them! Actually Maurice Benson never put on his "pads" the whole time he was with them. It was enough to disgust three honest, self-respecting boys for life.

But "Pat"—ah, there lay their hope! Pat was a good fellow. Pat was all right. As like as not she would never get married at all. No one ever made love to her the way Mr. Symington did to Marthe, or as all the "softs" of the neighbourhood went mooning and spooning about Baby Lant. But the fellows all chummed with Pat, though. And it would be A.1. and no error, if these old Egham pigs would just be so obliging as to "up 'n' die" and leave Pat the heiress after a month or two.

> "Where Boreham-Egham had been Lord of all
> Since the wild Picts drave at the Roman Wall,"

chanted Gilbert, who had been getting "Boreham Hall" by heart.

But in the girls' parlour was battle, murder, and sudden death—war, pestilence, and the sound of a trumpet. As for Patricia, the snorting of her horses could be heard unto Dan!

Marthe first, in right of seniority: "I won't and I shan't," she wept. "I don't want their old thousands —their nasty acres! I want to stay here, just where I am—no, not *just* what I am. I won't do it for father or mother—nor for the whole pack of your old Boreham-Eghams——"

"They aren't mine!" said Baby Lant; "I'm sure I don't want the horrors—never go out of the house, they say—stuck up there like mechanical dollies that won't work!"

"Yes, Marthe," said Patricia, tenderly for her, "we understand—you shan't have to go, if we can help it. Count on us. We will cover your retreat. But you must behave ever so badly when you get there. We must, I think, change characters. That's the way to disgust the old frumps with you. Then, after that, you can come back here and marry Willie——"

And seizing a convenient chair back, she made it revolve, while she herself waltzed round it, singing to an unkenned tune:

"O gentle wind, that bloweth south,
From where my love repaireth,
Convey a kiss frae his dear mouth,
And tell me how he fareth!

"O Willie's rare and Willie's fair,
And Willie's wondrous bonny,
And Willie promised to marry me
Gin ever he married ony!"

The last lines were rather jerkily delivered, owing to the fact that the singer had at the same moment to sing, to keep the chair revolving in the measures of the dance, and to evade the wild sweeps of Marthe, who had flung herself upon her sister, half laughing, half crying, and was trying to stop her with her hand over her mouth.

"For shame—how can you!" she gasped.

"Oh, *quite* easy—like me to begin again?" panted Patricia. "There's ever so many more verses—all about 'Sweet Willie'!"

"For pity's sake," cried Marthe through her tears, "do be sensible. You are never sensible, Patricia. You make fun of everything, and this means all the world to me!"

"There, there, don't cry," said Pat, catching her sister about the waist and pulling her on to her knee, "we will call you out of this game, eh, Baby Lant?"

"I say, Babe," Pat went on, stroking Marthe's smooth brown head in a way all her own, which she knew Marthe liked, "we shall form the 'Marthe Protection Society,' with secretaries and treasurers all complete—same as they do over at your Willie's church for the Aborigines and the Condemned Criminals Aid Society, and the Highlands and Islands! Very ungrateful these Highlands and Islands are, though. For they are always saying that Willie and all the other ministers are going to the bad place, because they don't believe the same thing as John Knox and those old people did! I wouldn't have any more collections for them, after you are married, if I were you, Marthe!"

"Oh, I wish you would not," said Marthe, lifting her tear-stained face and looking piteously at her sister, "you just spoil everything. You know that he has never said a word yet. He thinks that he ought not—that we are rich and he is poor—and, oh, I wish I had never been born!"

"Marthe, my little Marthe," said her younger sister, "don't, I tell you, don't. It will all come right. He does care, anyone could see that, the very blindest. And he shall speak, if I have to call and ask his intentions with father's Webley. There, I won't make fun. But trust us, Baby Lant and your old Sis Pat, we can paddle our own canoe, and it will be a very remarkable prince consort who can get much

change out of us! Anyway, we will see you on the right side of the fence, and

"'Marr-ri-ed to your Willie, marr-ri-ed to your Willie,—
With nothing to fear and two hundred a year,
Marr-ri-ed to your Willie!'"

She was a cheerful young woman to have in the house, this Patricia McGhie. So, in the girls' parlour a plot was hatched on the spot.

"We've *got* to go to that horrid old castle. Mother has to go with us. For all the use she'll be, they might as well have sent——"

"Patricia!" cried Marthe, "think of the first commandment with promise!"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Patricia; "I could do with a little less promise to our commandments. If they would only leave out heiressdoms and Egham Boreham-Eghams—scissors! it sounds like a real ham-and-eggy Scotch breakfast, served by men in kilts with cock's feathers in their bonnets, like they have at some of the Highland Railway Hotels!"

"I wish you wouldn't say '*like* they have,'" cried Marthe; "I'm sure Miss Cleary told you often enough it was vulgar!"

"Marthe, you were born ungrateful," remonstrated Pat. "Here we are, Babe and me, planning everything, so that you may be poor and happy all your life. And you go and chuck Miss Cleary at our heads about grammar. Pretty Irish accent *she* had, if it comes to that—the owld fuzzy-haired Skye-terrier-worshipping darlint!"

"Patricia!"

"Now, Marthe," said Pat, soberly, "if you are going to go off at intervals like a heavy paternal one-ton gun, commit-his-body-to-the-deep, I'll pack you off this minute to be an heiress, and you'll never see your ain dear Willie—never no more at all. Besides I'll stop stroking your head, and you won't like that!

Just dry up till it stops rainin', as the poet Dryden says in his 'Odyssey'!"

"I don't believe he ever said any such thing!" cried Marthe, with her head nestled on her sister's shoulder.

"Oh, *very* well then," said Patricia, "call your own nearest and dearest a liar—just when she is prepared to make a virgin martyr of herself and become rich beyond the dreams of Thingumbob, all for your ungrateful sake. Do it! It's all she can expect!"

"Patricia, I wish you wouldn't; my head aches," said Marthe, plaintively. "I can't go through everything—making fun and talking to burglars and cheeking the universe, like you."

Patricia let her hand drop, pretending to be struck dumb by the last words. She sighed wearily.

"That it should have come to this!" she cried. "Only to think that my own eldest sister should have said such things about me—a poor, innocent girl like me, ready to take every penny she is ever likely to possess in the world—'going about cheeking the universe.' She said I cheeked the universe! These were her words! Oh, Marthe!" And she made pretence to sob.

But Marthe was not in the least put about—this time.

"Go on stroking my head, Pat," she said, "and tell me what you are going to do when you get to Egham Castle!"

"Wait and see!" said Patricia, mysteriously. "I daren't tell you now!"

And really she could not, for she did not know.

. . . . .

Before they went, their mother's person had to be newly covered up with the richest purchasable materials, arranged by the best dressmakers in the style appropriate to middle-aged ladies of respectable position. And the eldest of the three girls? What

was the nature of her leave-taking with Mr. Symington, would never have been revealed by Marthe, if it had not been for Pat's unjustifiable interference. He walked home with her under one umbrella from the Back Mill Lands Mothers' Meeting. Pat met them near the turn of the walk, which is just *not* commanded from the window of P. Brydson McGhie's study.

"You'd better do it here!" she said. "Ten yards farther on, father'll spot you!"

Which glaring slang Marthe could not resent under the circumstances, as, in the interests of the departed Miss Cleary, she felt that she ought.

"Now," said Pat, coming back after a season—and a season—spent looking for brambles on raspberry bushes, "I suppose you feel very poor and mean and churchyardy, you two. But cheer up! Baby Lant and I will protect her with our lives. We will be content to live miserable and rich all our days, and bring her back to two hundred a year and you, Brother Willie!"

"Oh!" cried Marthe, faintly, from some undefined locality where her cries were half stifled.

"What's the matter?" said Pat, sharply.

"What you called him!" said Marthe, freeing herself with an effort. "Think shame!"

"Well, he is, isn't he?" said Pat, easily. She loved clear understandings. "You are going to be our dear Brother Willie, aren't you?"

"It is my most precious hope!" said the Rev. William Heath Symington, with whose dark Inverness cloak Marthe's hat and feather had become tangled in the twilight.

"Ah, I thought so," said Pat. "Better be, too! Do either of you think that I would be mussing about here at this time of night, when I should be packing my duds, laying out my war paint, dodging father's genealogical lectures, and inventing excuses why you, Marthe, have not yet come in, if he *wasn't* to be my dear Brother Willie? I say, I suppose it *is* two

hundred a year you have—I want to know. Father won't ask him, and I don't suppose that you ever thought of it, Marthe. So *I* must."

"I daresay with the little I earn in other ways, I can make it somewhat more than that," said Mr. Symington, blushing and stammering.

"What other ways?" demanded practical Pat. "Grab it out of the church door plate under cover of your gown as you go by?"

"Oh, Patricia!" cried Marthe, plaintively. "She doesn't mean it!" she added from the retirement to which she had returned; "Pat is always like that."

"And a good thing for some silly little fools that she is!" said Patricia, emphatically.

"I am getting a fairly good connection with the press," explained Mr. Symington. "Last year I made at least £60. I give you my word of honour I did not grab it from the offertory, as you suggest. I use that only as a last resort, Sister Pat!"

"That's where your brown Jouvin gloves came from, I bet!" said Pat, with strong certainty. "Let's see, Brother Willie—£260 AND a manse, with no taxes to speak of, and no bad habits except that of buying Jouvin gloves—well, you may manage. But, Brother Willie, you will have to shake up your old newspaper editors and get some more money out of them!"

"I daresay I could," said Mr. Symington, "if I had the incentive!"

"Don't worry, I'll be your incentive!" said Pat, viciously. "If you don't do your duty by Marthe, you'll have to settle with me! Come—to horse—away! No, not a moment more—I forbid the banns. Most hard-heartedly do I forbid them! Never been taken that way myself, and may Allah and all the minor prophets preserve me. Good night, Brother Willie. Go home and get out the long pole you stir up the editor fellows with! Think of ME!"

As the minister went home he thought within his black-coated bosom that he had never seen such a girl

as Patricia. But, being a man with a taste for the plain dishes at a feast, he concluded with a private thanksgiving that Patricia McGhie was to be to him only a sister-in-law and not a wife.

Dear, sweet, simple little Marthe! He could see her all day moving about the little manse. Patricia didn't fit there, somehow.

Meanwhile Baby Lant tranquilly arranged her wardrobe. She was quite content with her sphere and station in life—to be known as "the pretty Miss McGhie," to stay in the corner of a sofa and have desirable young men, riding on horses, come and tell her so—that was in the meantime quite enough for Baby Lant.

As for Patricia—she didn't care one way or the other. She knew that in any case, at home or abroad, she would have to do the collar work for the family. She could see herself nursing Marthe's babies—smacking them, too, bossing Gilbert at College, reforming Bob, and arranging who Baby Lant was *not* to marry.

She knew it would all fall on her. She had never expected anything else. It was what she was made for.

CHAPTER X

EGHAM CASTLE

When Mrs. McGhie and her three daughters reached Egham Castle, the ancestral abode of the De Boreham-Eghams, all that one of her daughters remarked was, "Well, it looks it!" There is no use indicating the speaker.

Egham Castle had been built in the later years of the eighteenth century, upon a superb site, surrounded by miles of woodland—now temporarily impoverished, said good judges, by the rapacity of Controller Hammer, who had no notion of the use of a tree except as timber bringing in so much per cubic foot, and who never thought of spending a penny upon planting or fancy forestry.

Egham was a fine old Palladian house, with a double front flight of steps wide enough for a Roman temple of Jupiter. Rows on rows of heathen gods were stuck over the porch and disposed in niches, the dolphins and thunder-bolts of the gentlemen conspicuously ornamented with eaves' droppings and sparrow work, and the ladies being in the taste of the Regency, were mercifully green-moulded to suit the conventions of another age and climate.

The modern Egham Castle stood on the site of a baronial fortress with round towers, crooked staircases, wheel wells in the courtyards, and the recurring three acorns of the ancient Saxon family of the De Boreham-Eghams which had emigrated northward in the time of Margaret, the queen of Malcolm Canmore. So

at least said the predecessors of Mr. Alf Caigton, who had been at the bottom of the ancient books of heraldry, even as he and his like are the foundation stones of the new.

Two serving men on either side, the Hammers, husband and wife, in the centre, welcomed the four ladies to Egham Castle.

"Mr. Egham Boreham-Egham hopes you will excuse him," said Mr. Hammer, the points of his shot-silk—purple-and-black—aniline whiskers waving in the breeze. "Mr. Egham Boreham-Egham is very delicate, and the least exertion fatigues him. Indeed, he has never *quite* got over the writing of the letter of invitation!"

Thus far Mr. Hammer. During the delivery of this speech he had bowed four times, once separately to each of the ladies. And already in his own mind Mr. Hammer had made his choice—which, though they did not know it, was all there was to the business.

They might just as well have turned about the horses and gone back to the station—that is, all but the heiress.

Mrs. Hammer, otherwise Marigh, bent also. She was girt so tightly in stiff black silk that when she bowed she crackled all over, like a broomy knoll on a hot sunny afternoon in August, when the pods are opening by dozens.

The McGhie ladies were conducted upstairs into the sixty-foot *salon*, at the further end of which, one on either side of a meagre fire, as if to block it from running away, Mr. and Mrs. Philip Egbert Egham Boreham-Egham sat waiting.

They stood up to receive their guests, the gentleman being "boosted" (as Pat remarked afterwards) by Coaly Whiskers, while his wife, Marigh, did the same office for the lady. The two figureheads of the house retained this position sufficiently long to be kissed by their four relatives, and then subsided into their chairs with a sigh of genuine relief.

"I tell you what it is, Baby Lant," said Patricia, "if this performance is to be often repeated, I declare I shall have to support myself during the ordeal by hanging on to Mr. Hammer's purple elephant tusks!"

"For shame!" said Marthe. "Mother says that the Hammers are most valuable and faithful old family servants, and that uncle and aunt do nothing without consulting them."

"I should think not," said Patricia. "Well, if *I* am the chosen of Mr. Philip Egbert Egham Boreham-Egham—why they don't call him 'omelet' at once, I can't think—if I have to support those whiskers, they shall at least support me, that is if I have to salute uncle daily. Ugh! It was like kissing the wall of a new house when the plaster is still wet."

"Saluting aunt is like kissing an old one, where the plaster is green mouldy!" said Baby Lant.

"You ought both of you to be ashamed of yourselves," declared Marthe, sententiously.

"So we are, really, Marthe," cried Patricia, "only it doesn't show on us."

"It certainly does not!" said Marthe. "All the same, they are the only uncle and aunt we have got——"

"And quite enough, too, if they are samples of what the others would be," declared Patricia, trying to kick off her shoes without untying them.

"Fusty old things," said Baby Lant. "I couldn't stay here six weeks—not to be Prince of Wales. I should run home and marry the gardener!"

"For shame!" said Marthe—more faintly, however.

"All very well for you, Marthe," said Pat, glooming menacingly at the trim little figure, "with You-Know-Who waiting for you, and improving every shining hour by writing you screeds and screeds of love letters! But if, as I fear, it is my lot to remain in this gay abode, an innocent lamb offered up to the

sacrifice for the sake of my esteemed fambly, well, you know what a hive of bees does ? "

"Work ! " said Marthe.

"Sting ! " said Baby Lant. "I should ! "

"No—*hum !* " declared Patricia, viciously. "Things will 'hum' in this sub-Arctic palace hall, as saith Dryden the poet—I'll see to it personally—

> "'That lots of things get up and hum,
> Which once were good and dead and dumb ! '

See Dryden's 'Rape of the Lock' ! "

"I don't believe Dryden ever wrote that, or the 'Rape of the Lock' either," said Marthe, "but I shall ask Willie ! "

"Ah, Willie," said Pat, carelessly, "*he* had better mind what he is about, contradicting me, or I shall make it double the money before he can have you ! Twice £260 is—is—how much is it, Marthe ? "

"You—you——" cried Marthe, indignantly, unable to get further.

"Yes, just me, AND he knows it ! " said Patricia. "I have got little Willie on a string. He's scared stiff for fear I should say, 'Avaunt—begone—never shall I sully the McGhie ancestral tree with a Heath Symington ! ' "

"I dare you to say any such thing," cried Marthe. "I shall marry whom I like. You've got nothing to do with me ! "

"Oh, haven't I ? " cried Patricia. "All right, little lady. I have only to behave badly, and *you* shall be the heiress ! and say 'Yes, sir,' 'Certainly, sir,' to the prince consort when Hammer brings him up the stairs. And Willie will go out straight off and drown himself in Yarrow, in spite of the fact—which I think I mentioned before—that he is 'wondrous fair and wondrous bonnie——' "

"Patricia," cried Marthe, half laughing, half in tears, "I wish you wouldn't speak like that. It makes me all creepy ! It might bring bad luck ! "

"Oh, bad luck—bad luck to it," cried Pat, getting ready for bed in a kind of misty whirlwind, her wardrobe distributing itself to the four corners of the room, while the other two conscientiously folded away their things as at boarding school. The girls' rooms were on the floor above their mother's, and, happily, all communicated by practicable folding doors.

There was a loud bump, the creak of long-disused springs, as Patricia made a flying leap between the sheets.

"The bed's been aired, that's one thing," she cried. "I say, you two, if the Gray Lady of Egham walks with her head in her hand, and the headsman's axe that cut it off in the other, I shan't see her. For I'm dead sleepy."

"*Ooooh!*" "*Eeeeeeeeeh!*" came simultaneously from Marthe and Baby Lant. "You horrid mean thing, Pat! Now *I* shan't sleep by myself—not for a moment; if it were ever so!"

Five seconds after, Marthe and Baby Lant, having much curtailed their toilette arrangements, were in bed—one bed—clutching each other fast and with the clothes pulled well over their heads.

As for Patricia, she slept the sleep of the just. She even snored a little—that is, till she really went to sleep.

The days of her sorrow were not yet.

. . . . .

It was the dark, dark night—the same night—down in a well-furnished chamber on the ground floor. From bedsteads riding at anchor in opposite corners of the apartment Marigh and Algernon, joint controllers of the house of Boreham-Egham, compared notes, like rival cocks crowing at each other, each from his own private coign of vantage.

"The eldest one looks the softest," said Marigh, meditating into the thick darkness, "but, of course,

you can't never really tell till you try them. And those dumpy, little, round, partridgy girls—well, large families are so very unmanageable, and I can see by the look of her that it's on us that the trouble of rearing would fall. No; on the whole, the second pleases me best, Algernon!"

Cunning Algernon waited till his wife had achieved her catalogue, so that he might agree with her, and, as it were, clinch the matter at the proper moment.

"That second 'un," said Marigh, "she looks masterful, but——"

"What do you think of Miss Atalanta, the youngest? Now she's a beauty, if you like!" remarked the far-seeing Algernon, adding under his breath, "that's enough, if I know Marigh!"

He had selected Patricia at the first glance, before the girls had followed their mother out of the carriage. But he wanted it to appear as if the choice came from Marigh. So he "queered" Baby Lant, as he would have said, by praising her beauty. Marigh objected to pretty girls on moral and personal grounds. She would as soon have taken into her own house—Egham Castle—a maidservant who came with the recommendation that she had just done seven years' time for highway robbery.

"I wonder to hear you, Algernon," cried Marigh, a mere voice crying out of the thick darkness, "I do wonder to hear you—a proud, idle, vain thing, a piece, a minx! I saw her look in the mirror before she had been half a minute in the room. I was helping old Curl Papers up on her feet when I caught her at it. And, when I was passing by the keyhole of her door to-night, I heard her say that—oh, the shameless minx!—that if she had to kiss master again, she would sustain herself by holding on to your whiskers —*your* whiskers! Can you imagine it?"

Caressing the noble appendages in question, Algernon began to think more kindly of Baby Lant. But recognising that he had fully committed himself,

he "hemmed" a moment, and then said, "At least there is nothing of that sort about the second, Miss Patricia, eh, Marigh? She does not look like a young —person—with any entanglement. She won't have young fools coming writing poetry to her, and with never a thought in their heads but whether she is pretty or not. No, *she* is not that style of girl. I quite agree with you, Marigh. We always do think alike—in serious matters, that is. The second will do, then—eh, Marigh?"

"She's my choice, certainly," said his wife; "she was from the first, and what I heard at the keyhole —well, *that settled it!*"

The lady had not yet accustomed herself to distinguish the voices of the sisters, as heard through keyholes. Nor did she appreciate their several characters. Or she would never have credited Baby Lant with such a speech. Therefore Patricia was elected, chosen in conclave, as it were, at the very first ballot.

The formal assent was given a few days after by the voice of Mr. P. E. Egham Boreham-Egham.

"We are pleased with all three of your daughters, sister," he said, while Hammer stood behind to make sure that there was no mistake, "with all of them, and very much so. But" (he added), "as it is necessary to choose one for our heiress—there is no entail on any part of the estates, it was broken in the early part of the nineteenth century—it is our intention, subject to your consent and that of my esteemed brother-in-law, Mr.—ah—McGhie, that it shall be your second daughter, Miss Patricia!"

"Provisionally!" said Hammer in his ear.

"Ah, yes," said the Lord of Egham, going on hastily, like a schoolboy who has been reminded that he has left his task half said, "that is to say, of course, we will arrange the matter thus—ah—provisionally. We must see to it that we suit the young lady, and, ah—that the young lady is—is—amenable!"

He paused a little, searching for the final word, did not quite succeed, but took it in lieu of better.

During all this rather jolty and wire-drawn harangue Mrs. McGhie had acted her part to admiration, though, as usual, without saying anything articulate enough to be set down on paper. But now, at last, she said a memorable thing.

"Yes, yes, Philip Egbert," she replied, "I have often remarked it. But how wonderful it is that you should have found it out at the very first. Patricia is by far the most amenable of my daughters!"

In this way Patricia became provisionally an heiress, and in the intervals of padding and powdering, of dressing and undressing, bedding and unbedding, the Lord and Lady of Egham Castle, the controller and Marigh regarded her walk and listened carefully to her conversation.

"She *does* seem an amenable young lady!" said Marigh, to whom this had been a new word. "Not but what I should have liked her to show a little more interest!"

"Marigh," said Algernon Hammer, "for once—only for this once, mind, Marigh—you don't know what you are talking about. Lack of interest! Why, that's the very thing. She will do just what we want and make no trouble. She writes letters, but *I* post them. They are all to her family. She finds herself a little homesick, no doubt, but that'll wear off! A good sign, I call it! A most domestic young lady, and very polite. 'Mr. Hammer, and how is your wife this morning?' 'Mrs. Hammer, pleased to see you looking so young and healthy, and how is your husband this morning?'— a very proper spirit! A beautiful spirit, I call it, in one so young! We could not have fallen on better. Not a word about old Croaker Corsets, or old Madam Powder Puffs. Bless you, that girl's head's screwed on the right way. *She* knows which side her bread is buttered on. She's quiet, mark me, Marigh, but she

sees as far through a wooden post as some ten times her age!"

"I hope, Algernon," said his wife, with a touch of resentment at this long and high-pitched eulogium, "that you will never have reason to change your mind. No, I don't mean anything. I have no reason to mean anything. But—a young woman whose hair curls natural, and who walks the woods like a Guards' officer, and whistles over her shoulder to a pair of dogs, will bear watching. Oh, I do admit that she's always been most respectful to me! I have no complaint to make. I only spoke for *your* good, Algernon. A man is always that easy took in!"

CHAPTER XI

THE FALL OF THE KID

"He's a 'hoodoo'! I tell you," said Corn Beef Joe, crossly. "I don't know how he managed it, but I was one trip with that young man, and all we brought home was our hide and our tools. It'll be a wonder if we brings home as much this time. Kids is off! We of 'Blind Jacob's' don't use them. And I don't see that there is anything he can do for you, that I can't."

Mr. Alf Caigton, the perfect tourist—knickerbockers, spats, Norfolk jacket, and broad heather-mixture cap—looked at his companion, the same lounging, lazy, dangerous rough as ever. Then he shook his head.

Next he coughed because he did not want to quarrel with Mr. Corn Beef Joe. Then he said, "Well, the truth is, he can go with his innocent young face into places where they would make short work o' your phiz or mine!"

"What sort o' places?" said Corn Beef, suspiciously. One crib was the same to him as another, except for the difference in the lock fittings.

"Well, you see," said the pedigree man, soothingly, "it's this way: I have a job on up at Egham yonder—*the* castle, you know. It's not money, for they don't keep none. That beast Hammer has every 'make' in the bank in half an hour. Their silver is too heavy to carry away, and isn't in my line, anyway, though being an old family they have some hunder-weights of it. But it's the dockyments I'm after, *and* a thousand

quid—sure pay, if I get them. I have to fork out a fair half of it to the Knifer, though—who loans me that boy, and who pays you, my friend, whether I get the dockyments or not."

Corn Beef said nothing, but only remained sulky.

"Well," continued the pedigree man, yawning in the shade of the big fir tree under which they were reclining, 'I don't suppose that you and I, Joe, could make much of a figure up yonder in a tight suit and buttons down the front, with a card tray for callers, and fold our arms under our chins when the young lady, wot they have chose for their heiress, drives out in her dogcart."

"Wot," cried Joe, "he's never a 'tiger,' is he, that Kid?"

"But that's what he is, though," said the pedigree man, "and no end of a good 'tiger' he does make. It was me that thought on it first, and he is larnin' all about the papers and boxes in that house, and when the time comes he'll lift them. Maybe we won't have to set a foot on the carpets ourselves. Perhaps you will have to open a safe—just as it happens. Hammer—the boss butler—that's what he is, don't care about nothing but money. But the old boy, having nothing else to do, often takes a fit of arranging his papers and all that. Then he locks them up safe, and lies awake with the key round his neck—old rattlesnake, he is—all rattles and no snake!"

"Easy scragged, that kind," meditated Corn Beef Joe softly, his long bony fingers twitching as if grasping something.

"Come," said Alf Caigton, uneasily, "I'm not on for that kind of talk. Getting hung by the neck till I'm dead won't help me any, nor them that pays me."

"What I don't understand," said Corn Beef Joe, biting at a blade of tough grass between his black, uneven teeth, and scragging a field cricket, as if it had been the master of Egham Castle, "is—why,

if the bloomin' heiress is the daughter of the chap you're workin' for, and the papers he wants are in the house where she is—why don't she up and get them herself?"

"Joe," said Mr. Alf, "you're a good fellow and reliable as far as ye go. But there's axles within wheels at this game. My old joker, he daren't tell anyone but me what he's after, till I've all the papers slick, and the tombstones superscribed, and buried, ready to be dug up. Then he goes with all his proofs in one hand and a thumpin' big cheque in the other, to the bloke wot writes the arms an' pedigrees in a book. Then after it has been printed and all dikkered up with arms and chiefs of McGhie, and 'hald retour of the lands of McGhie in 1227 A.D.,' and how he swam in an ark of his own alongside o' Noah at the flood, holding wireless communication with Shem and Japhet—Ham never having learned his Morse and being a disgrace to the family, anyway!—why, after that has stood a couple o' years and been copied into all the other blue-blood manuals—why, McGhie of Balmaghie, chief of that name, is as good as the McCallum More and a great deal better than any one of them beer lords, who have no ancestry to speak of, except that their father made good beer and their grandfather better—pity it's all drunk up now!"

"But what does your McGhie do it all *for?*" inquired Corn Beef Joe, mystified.

"Just to get in wi' the nobs, him and his fambly," said Mr. Alf, fluttering the leaves of his notebook. "Perhaps if he proves that he has a clear descent for three hundred years, they'll make him a baronet. He has money enough. Or he'll go in for politics, and give thousands and thousands to the treasure chest of the party——"

"Is it a Chubb, think ye?" inquired Joe, whose interest was professional.

"Oh, no, it just means giving money to help the red or the blue politicians to win at the elections,"

explained Mr. Alf Caigton, "an' if he gives enough and often enough, they'll make him a lord, maybe—I shouldn't wonder. But, mind you, to be rich is the main thing. And this pedigree business is just a frill to his shirt, so that when he gets made a lord on account of his money, them he has to 'sociate with won't say, 'Oh, wot an outsider!'"

"I see," said Corn Beef Joe, "but it's blame nonsense, anyway, to my thinkin'!"

"U-m-m-m-m-m, yes!" said his companion. "But, you see, fakin' pedigrees is a small perfession and well paid. You don't risk the rope. You live fat. You have your ex's sure—no grumbling about *them*. And if you can't find anything exactly to the purpose—why, all you've got to do is to *make* something! Easy as comin' downstairs when you slip on the top step!"

. . . . .

Meanwhile the progress of the Kid at Egham Castle had been rapid in the extreme. Almost at his first entrance he had been able to conquer the liking of Mrs. Hammer. Marigh had never seen such a willing boy, so she told her husband.

Now Algernon's opinions with regard to all boys whatsoever were exactly those of his wife with regard to pretty girls. They must be naturally vicious, and would bear watching. It occurred to Mrs. Hammer, for instance, that the occasional gift of a copper coin of the realm to the new "buttons" would provide her with an excellent and inexpensive check on the movements, sayings, and, especially, writings of Miss Patricia McGhie. As our young friend was still on her probation, she had not been compelled to add the Egham Boreham-Egham to her name. And, indeed, in contempt of all Celtic chiefships and Saxon ancestors, she continued to sign her hasty letters crisply "Pat"—that and nothing more.

The Kid had great opportunities for getting at the secrets of his young mistress, if Pat had had any

these days. But, with a duplicity, which, as Mr. Hammer would have been the first to point out, showed his natural depravity, he promptly informed Miss Pat of the propositions of that lady concerning his duties as spy. He exhibited the coppers in triumph and finally offered to tell "the old cat" just whatever Miss Patricia wished her to think.

He was not, and could not be, a remarkably scrupulous Kid. Nevertheless, considering his upbringing, he averaged pretty fair.

Pat contented herself with advising the Kid to consider her as his best friend, and—when asked—to say that "she was a good and dutiful young lady." "In saying which," remarked Pat, "you very much understate the truth—but, at least at first, you had better curb your youthful enthusiasm."

The instructions of Mr. Alf, communicated to the Kid, were to spot a small, flat, japanned box of papers marked "McGhie." If possible, to carry it off without creating any suspicion; at the worst, to locate it, so that it could be reached by Mr. Alf and his associate—the Knifer being temporarily detained by an engagement to work for Her Majesty in one of her palatial mansions known to the vulgar as prisons.

The box would certainly be among the contents of the big safe in the chamber of Mr. P. E. Egham Boreham-Egham. Indeed it was his only occupation to stick a long, sharp nose among the leaves of such musty old documents. There was, it appeared, no question of real theft. The papers had been collected by Mr. Egham Boreham-Egham at an earlier portion of his life, when Mr. Patrick McGhie was wishing to marry Mr. Boreham-Egham's only sister. These documents included papers showing the descent of the said Mr. Patrick through a cattle dealer, two pig drovers, and a tinsmith—so, as it were, they focussed the plebeian extraction of the "Balmaghie" McGhies. On these had been founded the original strong objections to the marriage on

the part of the owner of Egham Castle—objections which had only been overcome by the young people taking the law into their own hands, and running away together.

You would never have suspected them of this amount of spirit to look at them now, and only the great bulk of wealth amassed by the pig dealer's son had induced the ancient couple at Egham Castle to look favourably upon one, at least, of their nieces.

It may well be understood then, that with such vivid hopes of succeeding to a clan chiefship dating from the stone age, Mr. P. Brydson McGhie did not wish to be confronted with the drover and the pair of pig dealers, not to speak of the tinsmith. Instead of leaving his money to his eldest son, the chief of McGhie was arranging to make a trust of it, out of which each of his children should be paid a certain yearly sum—Gilbert, of course, having the largest share. Then out of the capital the trustees were empowered to buy up all valuable pieces of land, and good freehold houses coming into the market, within a certain radius of his then property of Balmaghie. Whereupon, as soon as Gilbert, or any of his other children, or any direct male descendant of any of his sons or daughters should receive a heritable title, the whole capital of the McGhie trust was to be made over to him, subject only to the life rents at that moment payable, which life rents would of course fall in with the deceases of the said life renters.

Thus a peerage, even a baronetage, became the goal for all the family of McGhie, and with the chances of the Egham Boreham-Egham connection, and the selection of a suitable prince consort, the betting was heavy in favour of Patricia "scooping" the whole family money. Meanwhile the McGhie boys were being taught to support themselves. Gilbert was going forward to be a surgeon, Tom driving a steel nib in a lawyer's office—that of Messrs. Searle and Dalmahoy, who had drawn up the McGhie Trust

—while Bob, being the scapegrace of the family, was, of course, destined for the ministry, though at present he showed no desire to fulfil his obligations in the way of passing the necessary examinations.

All the boys, especially Bob, had the utmost belief in the fairness with which Pat, if she did "scoop in" the dollars, would "divvy up." But they did not allow their minds to rest upon the possibility that Pat's husband, when he came to his prince consortship, might see the matter in a somewhat different light.

"Well," said fair-minded Gilbert, "it's no use abusing the governor. He made the money—he and no other. And he can do what he likes with it. I'm going to stick to dissecting—so as to get a good resident's place in a hospital. Then, as soon as I can afford it, I shall set up as a lady's doctor—very swell—dreadfully expensive, in a tiptop locality. And if I don't knock out a baronetage for prescribing whisky and lemon to some rheumatic old royal dowager, I'm a Dutchman, that's all. I think I can beat Pat's young man. She doesn't look like a girl that would get married in a hurry. Besides which, I'm really the eldest son, and you know the Good Book says, 'Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just'!"

The other McGhies did not dispute the quotation, but having no great chance of attaining a peerage or any other mark of distinction—except in the case of careless Bob, the bankruptcy court—they continued to pin their faith to the generosity and fair-mindedness of "good old Pat."

It was in these complicated family circumstances that the Kid, legal and real head of the Clan McGhie, and son of David, late of Back Mill Lands, became Pat's assistant and confidant in her first struggles for independence in the Hammer-ridden house of Boreham-Egham.

"I've got to stay here," she said, "at any rate till Marthe pulls it off with her Sweet Willie. She's

next favourite, and if I give up, she's in for it. And it would break her heart, poor old girl. After all, it's not much to do for one's family!"

Luckily, at the moment, she did not know how much there was to be done. For Algernon and Marigh had not yet begun to deploy their forces. They had not even settled upon the prince consort. As usual the question of finance was the difficulty.

"You see," said Algernon, as this model couple sat over their cup of afternoon tea, which the fair hands of Marigh always prepared for Algernon, "we don't want any of those old decayed famblies, with no money. Lor' knows Old Poker and Lady Tongs upstairs are decayed enough to serve for twenty generations. There's young Tempest Kilpatrick, over the hill, of course. He's a wild lot, and will have money in time. But then he has none of it now, and we must have money down. There's Jim Scudamore, too, of Scudamore, McMath, and Scudamore, W.S. He's in the same box—son of my old master—I'd be pleased to give him a hand. But it's cold cash, and clear out sharp for us. At least, the cash we must have. It passes the wit o' man, as the sayin' is, to devise a deed that would hold a young fellow marrying our heiress, and promising to pay us out of the dowry afterwards. The first thing *we* should get would be, 'WALK!'"

Marigh nodded. She was proud of her far-seeing husband's mind—next, I suppose, to her pride in the glossy purple whiskers, which depended like the tusks of a wild boar, one at either side of his pinky, full-fed face.

"No lord in low water, nor yet any young aristocrat on his promotion," said Algernon, summing up. "A man of business, that's what we want, who has made money in trade, willing to plank down the cash for himself, or——"

"Why not Lord Athabasca?" said Marigh, suddenly. "He's rich enough."

Algernon got up, and flinging his arms about his wife's neck, saluted her ponderously on the cheek.

"Marigh—Marigh!" he cried, with youthful rapture, "you are worth your weight in seed pearls. The very man! Ripe, past middle age, a widower, and his wife (that's dead) a squaw—a red Indian, brown as my boots with a touch of husky, as my poor brother Ben said, who was in the Nor'-west police for bigamy. Lord Athabasca—and no other. Gives away millions, but don't get took up by the real aristocracy. Gets on—but not *in*. Deuced keen to get in. He'd jump at the heiress of Egham Castle like a trout takes a March brown. He can't keep his eyes off her in church as it is. Oh, Marigh—Marigh! What a woman you are!"

Marigh smiled, visibly flattered by all this enthusiasm, but, like a practical woman, she wished the subject discussed in all its bearings.

"But he's over sixty, if he's a day," she said, "and has a grown-up son!"

"A crank from Crankyshire!" said her husband, contemptuously; "good o' the people—polytechnics, reformatories, protechnics, *and* Old Age Homes—such rot! No wonder his father has cut him off, or nearly, mixing himself up with such trash! If every working man and woman was as provident and careful as you and me, Marigh, there wouldn't be no need of suchlike. Old Age Homes, indeed! The workhouse is too good for them that hasn't had the pluck and forethought to look after themselves! That's my mind on't!"

"Ah, indeed, you're right, Algernon," said Marigh, "Where would *we* have been if we hadn't looked after ourselves? Have another cup o' this Soochong, Algernon. It stood old skinflint upstairs in six shillings a pound, as I know by the receipt. Shipton's best, at one and-a-penny, is good enough for them! They don't know the difference!"

"Yes, and all in a manner o' speakin', *our*

money! We may as well drink it!" said her husband.

So in this manner the fate of Patricia was decided. The fate was sixty-five years of his age and was entitled Lord Athabasca.

. . . . .

Patricia was introduced to my Lord (colonial) Athabasca, who, as he said himself, had no more pedigree than a fly on a tepee wall, but who had the greatest respect for it when he found it in its ancestral halls in the old country. Patricia had the hardest work to restrain herself from telling him that her grandfather drove bullocks to Barnet Fair, and was much esteemed at a bargain. But because she did not want the bubble to burst just then—for the sake of Marthe and Mr. Symington, who were getting on swimmingly—she refrained herself.

Athabasca was a nice old man, a little pompous from the habit of dominating provincial parliaments and addressing speeches of welcome to governors-general. He had a bald spot on his crown which he covered with some success by the double-pleating method, and another lower down on the bulge of his cerebellum which was beyond all hope. With his hat on, it gave him the look of having been mortally wounded by a billiard ball and yet getting about lively, a marvel of the surgeon's art.

Nevertheless, he was a very nice old man, and with most settled, respectable opinions—nobody more so. Which made it the more sad about his son, wearing a red tie, as anyone could see, and—they said—going to stand for any seat that would have him in the socialist interest. Worst of all, he called himself a Fabian, which nobody understood, but which all felt must be something very bad indeed.

This was the more surprising as in Canada, where Hearne Mackenzie's life had been spent, he had been known as the finest dancer, the finest skater, the

finest snowshoe runner, the gayest and the brightest of all the stars who sparkled there in that frosty sky of winter.

But here in England he had as many views as an up-to-date countess, and looked as serious as a president of the Oxford Union three minutes before he has to begin his valedictory address.

It was after this fashion that my Lord Athabasca regulated the situation with Mr. Algernon Hammer:

"I understand—I understand," he said. "I am most willing to marry the young lady. I consider that she is a very remarkable young lady indeed! She will be a credit to any establishment, and, without doubt, a remarkable contrast to my former —ah—yes—very willing indeed! I do not know how it comes to pass that you can influence the young lady's decisions. But if you *can* do so in my favour—why, I have been a man of business all my life—and I am willing to meet you. How much do you ask?"

"Ten thousand pounds! Well, the article is worth it—that is, if I can depend upon delivery! Let me see. Choose your own day for the marriage. I will write you a cheque for £10,000 payable the day of my marriage. Further, I shall instruct my banker not to cash it before twelve o'clock! Agreed? Very well, then; if that is satisfactory, I will write you a cheque for the amount, shall we say, for this day three months, the twenty-fifth of February?"

"Now," said Marigh, "that is what I call a gentleman!" She was carried away by the bridegroom's manly ease, but her husband said only, flipping the post-dated cheque between the fingers of the left hand, "I would have preferred a little less palaver, and the cash paid down on the nail!"

"I daresay!" said Marigh, who had her times of clairvoyance; "but, you see, you could not pay Miss Patricia down on the nail!"

The proposition had then to be put before the two strapped, toothed, wigged, flannelled, and corseted automata up in the drawing-room. In other words, Lord Athabasca paid a visit as a neighbour, and in the course of it, after the usual compliments, he mentioned his desire to be allowed to pay his addresses to their interesting young ward, Miss Patricia McGhie.

"Egham Boreham-Egham!" exclaimed both the two automata in chorus.

"Well, to Miss McGhie Egham Boreham-Egham!" corrected the aspirant, reaching the end in a breathless manner.

"You have our best wishes," said both the automata, who had been well Hammered, "but do not be cast down at a first refusal. Young people, you know. And Patricia, we fear, has been spoiled. She has had a great deal of admiration."

"She deserves it!" said the honest peer. "There's not a handsomer girl between here and Peace River!"

The automata looked at each other. They smiled. In their opinion the business was settled.

"Ah, I have some documents," said Mr. Philip Egbert; "You will remember that the young lady is not our own daughter—adopted merely—a niece, in fact. It is right that you should know her pedigree. When her father, Mr. Patrick Brydson McGhie, married my sister, I made it my business to inform myself on the subject! The information is at your disposition."

"Oh, bother," said Lord Athabasca, under his breath; "if the girl is willing, that's all I care about. But I suppose this is the way they do things in these great old families, and I had better not give myself away."

Aloud he said: "I thank you very much, Mr. Boreham-Egham; it is not in the least necessary. But if you feel you are fulfilling a duty, then I have nothing more to say!"

This Mr. Boreham-Egham considered a very proper

response indeed, and accordingly departed in search of the casket.

It was not to be found!

A little, oblong, flattish, japanned dispatch box, with papers in it of no particular value to anybody, had disappeared, and for the first time for fifty years Mr. Philip Egbert Egham Boreham-Egham became agitated—violently agitated.

More than that, he was suspicious. Still worse, suspicious of his chosen heiress. Mr. Philip Egbert had few passions, but that of the genealogist was the chief of them. It generally indicates mental and physical decay—and, say the doctors, accompanies myopia, aphasia, degeneration, and is the forerunner of paralysis and imbecility. But, let the passion be ever so slight, it certainly aroused some dying spark in Mr. Philip Egbert, of the padded chest and the extensive nomenclature.

"I saw it yesterday with my own eyes," cried the genealogist. "Patricia has abstracted these documents—only because her grandfather was a cattle drover, and her two great-grandfathers, on the male side, pig dealers. She shall be no more heiress of mine—no, nor a moment longer a resident in my house. I will send for her elder sister, and you, my Lord Athabasca, shall marry her on the same terms. We have done with her—a girl who could do such an act is capable of anything!"

"But," remonstrated Lord Athabasca, more than slightly discomposed by the prospect, "I do not want to marry Miss Patricia's sister, and I *do* want to marry her. Have you not come rather too rapidly to a conclusion?"

"No—no—no!" screamed the padded man, almost shaking himself out of a double set of false teeth in his agitation. "I saw her—saw her with my own eyes, I tell you. She asked to look at them, because the box was labelled with her father's name. No doubt they have already been committed to the

flames—all because she is the daughter of a pig dealer, or her grandfather was, which amounts to the same thing. Absurd! As if adoption into the family of the De Boreham-Eghams were not sufficient to cover a whole styful of pig dealers. I require that she shall be sent for instantly!"

Now in the interval between Patricia's examination of the documents with regard to her pedigree and her summons to the drawing-room a most curious thing had befallen. Pat had indeed looked at the papers with some curiosity. Her father's father was a drover, and she sat long and pleasurably pondering on his strange life—a life of inns, bulging pocket-books, masked highwaymen with bludgeons and pistols—the rough life of the open road, the ponies he bestrode, the leagues he tramped it on foot, all the glad yellow bloom of all the glad yellow springs on whin brae and broomy knowe that he had passed, the larks he had heard sing, the girls he had kissed—all clay and leaf mould long ago. She hoped he had a good time while he lived, this grandfather of hers. For assuredly he was of small account now, that jolly cattle drover! Because, as it seemed to Patricia, there was in these ill times no more remembrance of the wise man than of the fool, in spite of the attested fact that wisdom exceedeth folly as the light excelleth the darkness!

And the pig dealer, the two dead pig dealers! Patricia heard the squeal of the unclean beasts as the two great-grandfathers of her line pinched their shoulders and poked them knowingly in the ribs. She hoped that they, too, had had whatever their eyes desired, that they had had possessions of small and great cattle, both Berkshires and the wiry breed of Ireland, and so enjoyed after their kind the delights of the sons of men and, to the amount of their bank account, gathered in silver and gold and the peculiar treasure of kings.

But as to regretting that she had such highway-pervading ancestors with their droves of beeves and

porkers, Pat McGhie only wished that she had been born in their day, and with her own ears listened to the merry noise of clicking horns, shouldering cattle, and clacking market places.

And now all of a sudden, lo! she found herself in the presence of a man she did not know—even her uncle, Philip Egbert Egham Boreham-Egham, angry, denunciatory, virulent. She had taken these papers—she, Patricia. Only she had any interest in doing so.

No, she denied it. She had left them on the table. Mr. Boreham-Egham must have displaced them himself. And then—swift as the sheet lightning that quarters the heavens in the heart of the dog days, Patricia remembered.

On the back stairs as she ran down to have a word with cook, concerning certain small favouritisms connected with dinner time, she had met—whom but the Kid, her Kid—McGhie's Kid with exactly such a box, and, moreover, not held openly in his hand, but dissembled, or partly dissembled, under his arm!

"Do you know anything of the matter whatsoever?" demanded the genealogist. "Only you or one of your family could have had the least interest in removing these papers. Do you know or do you not know?"

"I do not recognise any right you have to cross-examine me!" retorted Patricia, fiercely.

"That I will show you," said the aroused man of the pads. "Send Hammer to me, and go and pack your trunks, young lady!"

"You can ring for Hammer when it pleases you," said Patricia, with the defiant chin of the pig dealer with a big fight on hand; "and as for my trunks, I shall go more gladly from this stupid doll's house than ever I entered it. Papers, indeed—genealogies—cattle drovers and pig dealers among my ancestors, I suppose you mean. Why, they were

better men and of more use in the world than people who are only washed and dressed and put to bed like so many babies in a glass incubator!"

It is doubtful if Mr. Boreham-Egham heard this. It is certain that he would not have understood it if he had. Nothing so modern as an incubator had ever been mentioned in the "Gentleman's Magazine," which was the most recent literature allowed within the walls of Egham Castle. But my Lord Athabasca flashed a look at Patricia of admiration and gratitude.

"You will understand," he said, "that whatever happens, heiress or no heiress, my offer stands!"

Patricia held out her hand to him.

"Thank you," she said, "you are a good man! I wish——"

But she did not say what she wished, for just then the door was cleft as it were by a kind of earthquake shock. The Kid rushed in and stopped in front of Mr. Boreham-Egham.

"Oh, don't blame Miss Patricia," he said; "put me in prison—put me in prison. *I* stole the black box. *I* took the papers. *I* came into this house to do it!"

CHAPTER XII

HEARNE MACKENZIE REFORMATORY

"I DO wish, Molesay," groaned Sheriff Pebbles, excellent stipendiary magistrate, to the Cowgate police missionary, "that you would not bother me about such a small thing. You do not know how I have been upset—birth of my eighth child only yesterday, a boy—everything upset in the house. I really think I must go on a golfing holiday to tone me up! And now you come bothering me about your young thieves.

"What? The boy might have thought that the papers were in some way his own—McGhie family papers! What could a 'buttons' have to do with such things except to steal them? All right, then I will send him for five years to the Hearne Mackenzie Reformatory, where my Lord Athabasca's hare-brained son can take him down in the old, and set him up in the new. That will satisfy you, won't it? But please, Molesay, don't come interfering with the course of justice when I am so worried personally. Think—it happened only yesterday—an eighth child, a boy! I really must take a holiday. Oh, yes, the mother was doing, what is the phrase—as well as could be expected—that is, when I inquired last! But it is all most tiresome and upsetting to a man in my position!"

So they sent the Kid to the Hearne Mackenzie Reformatory, where, as into a mill, boys went in at one end marked with the brand of the law, and came out at the other good soldiers, brave sailors, and, in especial, excellent colonists.

"Yes," said Hearne Mackenzie, answering slowly, "it is true that I am a salaried official of this institution. Otherwise I should have to starve or emigrate, which would be selfish. I was sent into this world not to be idle. Yes, I sunk most of my grandmother's little fortune on this barren moor. You can see it yonder—that big playground covered from the rain, sheltered from the winter blasts, cost alone more than a thousand pounds. Oh, of course there were others, but they were rich, and when they put their hand in their breeches' pocket, their purses did not know the difference after they had brought it out. Mine did. *That* was all!"

"But your father," said the young lady to whom the assistant superintendent of the "Hearne Mackenzie" had got into the habit of talking, "I thought he was a rich man!"

"So he is—so he is," said the young man with a grim squaring of the jaw, "but you see over there, where I come from, we have a way of our own of obeying our parents. We do it by doing as they did. My father ran away from home when he was thirteen. I gave him three years' longer chance at me, and then I took my own line. Since that, I have not asked him for a penny. Nor do I mean to. He pleases himself– I please myself. Everybody is pleased. When he comes to see me here, I show him round like any other visitor——"

"And when you go to see him?" said the girl, who was, of course, Pat McGhie, let loose from Egham Castle, and on the track of her poor ex-button boy, the Kid.

"I *don't* go to see my father," said the young man, flushing a little, "I can't afford it. You see, I get a hundred and twenty pounds a year, and a little brick-built cottage on the opposite side of the road. And I work for the money, as the directors will tell you. Also, the superintendent is pleased with me. But if I went to my father's house, Three Ridings,

once or twice, the butler and the head keeper would expect half my salary. Besides, once when I was hard up I—I pawned——"

"You pawned what?" said Pat with a glitter of appreciation. "I begin to like you Athabascans."

"I pawned my dress suit!"

Pat McGhie stopped. She looked at the tall, solidly built, upstanding young man in amazement. He was in noways moved or ashamed. It seemed to him an every day sort of transaction.

He nodded merely and touched his cheek, which, aristocratic enough in curve and outline, like that of some carven Crusader, had still a certain duskiness of tint which told of Indian blood not far off.

He looked straight and quietly into the girl's eyes.

"They say you are to marry my father?" The words came slowly.

"He has asked me," said Patricia, feeling curiously as if she were reading a conversation printed in a book.

"Ah!" said the young assistant superintendent, "I congratulate you. He is a good man. It would have pleased my mother very much."

Pat started, and almost drew back from the quiet, grave-faced young man. It seemed that he must be laughing at her.

"You mean?"

"My mother was a squaw, a full-blood Sioux squaw. She always told me that the happiest time of her life was when she was out along with my father in the Land of the Little Sticks, and had to carry the poles for their tent. But when she was dying, she said that it would be very good for him to marry a white woman and have to carry *her* tent poles!"

A flash of a strange mirth flickered up in Patricia's face.

"Then *I* may be your stepmother. Shake, sonny!" she said.

And she held out her slim fingers, which the young man took gravely, bent over, and kissed.

"Hello!" cried Pat, surprised, "where did you learn that? Something more from your mother's people? Or did you pawn your bashfulness along with your dress suit?"

"Where I come from," said the young man with the first touch of accent in his voice, "it is good manners—of the best! It is always done, especially to—to ladies of one's own family!"

"Ah," said Pat, with a curious shortening of breath, as if the air had grown unaccountably rarified, "don't you think you are a—a little too previous?"

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Hearne Mackenzie, sedately.

"You mean I am certain to accept your father!" she said, unaccountably angered by his taking so much for granted.

"I understood that . . . it was arranged!" he answered, calmly.

"Then you will have to get your dress suit out for the occasion!" she said, with some spite, which the next instant she recognised as petty.

"Ah, no," he answered, with reflective sadness, "my father's concerns do not concern me! Nor mine him! Besides, the dress suit belongs to the wrong side of my family tree, the side I have the least sympathy with. If I reverted to the past, it would be to the pony, the fringed blanket, the Remington, not to the dress suit!"

Pat McGhie held out her hand.

"*My* grandfather," she said, quietly, "was a cattle drover, and to this day I never see a lot of cattle bunching on the road, pushing and horning together, but I long to be in among them with a tight rein and the stock of my whip!"

"But," said the young man, "I thought that you were proud and of a most distinguished family!"

Patricia shrugged her shoulders very slightly.

"So I am—on one side, the cattle drovers," she said smiling; "the rest are all Egham Boreham-Egham! But don't let us talk any more about myself. How's the Kid?"

"Alexander McGhie?" said the assistant superintendent, in his official manner. "He is promising well. To have passed through such hands as those of Knifer Jackson and Corn Beef Joe, the man in whose company he was last seen, he carries with him astonishingly little of the trade-mark of crime! There is generally something, probably something physical, which marks the boys we get. It shows in the face as if the blood were not a right red within, but a kind of pale-gray puce-colour."

"Soap and water?" suggested Pat.

"Partially," agreed the assistant superintendent, giving the matter his consideration, "but not wholly or even principally. See the boys in a mass before you, day by day, as I do. You *know* they are clean. You know they cannot help being clean. But the livid gray-puce look is there. And it takes a boy five full years to get rid of it up on our moors—that, and the furtiveness of the eye!"

. . . . .

The "Hearne Mackenzie" as it was called from its principal benefactor, sat high up on the level moorland. All about it was peat and heather, with isles and peninsulas of green pine wood, their roots striking down through the crumbly purple soil to the underlying and eternal moisture of the peat bog. The Hearne Mackenzie Reformatory, with all its buildings, workshops, annexes, playgrounds, the houses of the officers, floated, as it were, on the thin skin of dry peat land above the great morass of Maw Moss.

"Yet it is healthy," said the assistant superintendent, as he piloted his future stepmother, younger than himself by ten years, across the deep cuttings from

which, in the time of a former sub-superintendent, many cubic yards had been removed to make compressed peat.

"There is something antiseptic about this black bog land, even if you are only living above it. It is just 'tundra.' One might call it the Barren Grounds, as much as though it were well within the Arctic Circle. And the winds blow everything away—healthiest place in the British Islands! I chose it myself. And my boys are the happiest lads—all on their way to do well."

"How do you get on with your superintendent?" asked Pat.

"Oh, Carvel, he's all right," said the assistant; "more than that, he's the best man that God ever created—better than my father—better than any of those old patriarchs and things in the Bible. Though that is what he looks like, too, with his white beard and clear blue eyes, and a smile like a boy. I saw him at leapfrog the other day, and would have liked to join him if I had not been too old!"

"How old is he, then?" Pat asked, to her astonishment rather jealously.

"He is somewhere about sixty-three—I am thirty-one. But I am almost too old for him to have about. I might be his grandfather! The boys adore him, though. There are no rebellions, no big fights, when Carvel is about.

"'I prescribe walking-stick plaster, locally applied, immediately *and* copiously! And I'll do it myself!' That's what he says when any trouble is reported. And he picks up 'Clickie,' his trusty blackthorn, and wades in. The riot is quelled in precisely three warm minutes. Everyone is satisfied, and when dear old Mrs. Carvel appears on the scene with the sticking plaster and good advice, 'Clickie' is replaced in the corner, and the boys disperse to discuss who got the completest 'lundering.' There is never much to choose, however, and if by chance a boy who did not

deserve it gets 'one of himself,' he is the proudest boy in the school."

"But why are you assistant superintendent and Mr. Carvel over you?" demanded Pat. "I thought it was you who built all this. It is called after you, isn't it?"

"After my father!" said Lord Athabasca's only son, dutifully, "and Carvel is superintendent because he is leagues away the better man—the only man for the post, indeed. I nominated him myself!"

Patricia looked at the dusky, unmoved face of her companion. Certainly he was a most remarkable young man, and, yes—handsome. Not that *that* mattered.

In the interior of the Hearne Mackenzie, the Kid hoed his first row. He had been taken in hand by a lank boy of fourteen, familiarly called Swanker, in the dialect of the schools and workshops. On the roll his name was Henry Pott, and his number 579. The Kid's number was 666, and that was marked in red on every shirt and sock, on every article of clothing, tool and book which he was allowed to possess.

The Kid's name was promptly changed to "Beast," because, as one more Bible-learned than the rest pointed out, 666 was the number of the beast. So the Kid was immediately, and without prejudice, ear-marked accordingly.

"Say, Beast," said the Swanker, "have ye ony tobacco?"

"No," said Kid McGhie, "it's nasty stuff!"

"Maybe aye and maybe no," said the Swanker. "You'll learn. There's them in the school that'll punce you for no bringin' tobacco! What are ye in *for?*"

"Let them punce," said the Kid. "I can punce back."

The Swanker regarded the little fellow with contempt.

"Can you stop a shoulder hit?" he demanded, delivering a righthander straight at the Kid's nose just to try.

The Kid ducked, feinted low, and the next moment the Swanker felt a sudden and most astounding jolt on the point of his chin, which made him thankful that he wore no false teeth, so that he could not swallow them. The Swanker first of all looked round to see that no bigger boy had hit him a stinger at unawares. Then his eye fell on the Kid.

"Did *you* do that?" he said, glowering at him. The Kid nodded.

"Want me to do it again?" he remarked, squaring up.

"Well, no," said the Swanker, as if reluctantly declining through pressure of engagements, "not at present, that is. But who taught you that? It's regular 'pro' work, that is!"

"Knifer Jackson taught me," said the Kid, quite ignorant of the interest he would cause by the statement; "he's my father!"

"Ger-r-r 'long!" said the Swanker, between his teeth, "what're you givin' us?"

"The truth," said the Kid. "You're not used to it—that's all!"

"Then you are in here for runnin' with Knifer Jackson and the 'Blind Jacob's' boys?"

The Kid nodded. "Worse luck!" he said. "Five years!"

The Swanker whistled and reached for the wet clout with which the Kid was swabbing the dormitory floor.

"No use for you to waste your time at this sort o' thing," he said. "Why, if what you say is true—an' we'll soon find that out—you're away up! Soarin'! Why, Knifer and Corn Beef are at the very head of the 'pro.' You was nabbed with him, was ye? Ah, that would be a big job, or the Knifer would not have put him on to it. Where did it happen—Egham

Castle? Why, that's quite near here—just over the wall—you can see the pinnacle of the stable, gilt weathercock and all, out of 'choko.'"

"And what is 'choko' when he's at home? It means prison, I know, but they don't put you in prison here, do they?"

"Oh, don't they—you'll find out whether or no before you are many days older," laughed the Swanker; "but I daresay it will be made plum easy for you that's no end of a swell, and can get your people to 'butter' the warder and especially old Grainer, the schoolmaster. He's the only real bad egg here!"

"What do you mean?" asked the Kid, always eager for knowledge.

"If you've got money, or people coming to see you," said Swanker, "you've got to get them to slide something on the quiet to Grainer, or he'll half kill you in school. The supe—? Oh, old Carvel—he's the clean peeled potato, mealy to the core, and enough eyes to him to set a drill!"

Swanker was one of the field boys, and interested in agriculture.

"Carvel is never nasty," he continued. "He whacks you like carpet beating sometimes when there's a row. And he's not half particular whether it's you that's done it or not, so long as he gets it stopped. But the boys would most of them lay down their lives for Carvel. And as for Cherokee Bob—that's Mr. Hearne, him that built all this, and works harder than anybody—he's maybe a bit soft, chip out o' his cockernut, I bet, or he wouldn't stay in such a hole. But there's hardly a fellow, except Snout and Smutty, that would try to queer him. He's a topper, too, at football and games, is Mr. Hearne."

The Swanker went off to tell the news to the school, and after prayers the Kid, under his new name and number, was introduced to the boys and received the right hand of fellowship. "St. Jacob's" was, of course, the first subject of conversation.

"How many doors can you do?" they asked him.

"All," said the Kid, modestly; "and safes, too, if I get a help at the last tug, where weight tells. I'm not quite big enough, you see."

"Hello," cried some of those who did not know the capabilities of a graduate and, as it were, "fellow" of "St. Jacob's," "d'ye mean to say that you could open that dormitory door of ours with the warder on the other side?"

The Kid cast one glance at the heavy door.

"I've done with that business," he said, sweetly. "I'm in documents and pedigrees now. But that door—why, just for once as an exhibition game—I don't mind!"

He looked about him for a tool. These were naturally scarce at the "Hearne Mackenzie," for the class of boy and his antecedents had been studied with some care. But fancy work of a simple sort was not discouraged. Boys were allowed, under certain restrictions as to delivering up all wool, used and unused, to knit their own stockings.

"No use this," said the Kid, picking up a steel knitting needle, "too stiff. Ah, there——" a little coil of iron wire from the shops caught his eye. He untwisted a couple of handbreadths, broke it off short, did some folding, and lo! the skeleton of a key. He fumbled a moment, touching and trying, then suddenly straightened a piece of the wire, gave it a cunning hook—*click*—and the door was open!

The boys of No. 7 dormitory rushed tumultuously toward the black cavern of the outer passage. But the Kid was too quick for them.

With a second twist of his wire he fastened the door as before, pulled the wire straight, and bound it about the bundle.

"No, you don't," he said, "I am not going to sleep in 'choko' for attempted escape, this first night, at any rate!"

"Bah, you're afraid, that's what you are," said Smutty, a boy of fourteen, undersized, tobacco-chewing, who thrust his head pugnaciously forward at the Kid; "open that door again or I'll make you!"

"Open it yourself," said McGhie's Kid, "there's the key!" And he pointed to the coil of wire in the corner.

Smutty replied with a heavy blow at the Kid's mouth, which, however, the boy had no difficulty in parrying instinctively. The Kid had not been brought up with Mad Mag, and within reach of her hand, to be thus caught napping. The boys of No. 7 dormitory gathered eagerly round.

"A fight—a fight!" they cried.

But at that moment the bushy reddish beard and glaucous green-gray protuberant eyes of Warder McPherson showed themselves at the wicket, which he had opened noiselessly.

"Smutty," he said, "report to me to-morrow morning! And you, new boy, you've begun badly, fighting your first night. If you go on like this, you'll get cells. You'll sleep on the thing! Mind, I warn you."

This was Warder McPherson's word. He always referred to the plank bed as the "thing."

"Don't mind him," said Swanker, "learn your drill perfect, and stand up like a railway signal whenever old Pherson sees you. Make your hand go up to your cap just as if it was a piece of wood, and you'll have no trouble with old Pherson. He roars like a bull, but he's all little woolly lamb inside! He won't even tickle up Smutty to-morrow morning—which is a pity!"

They got into their bunks, which were arranged side by side, in long rows. There was a big lamp which burned all night in each of the dormitories, and the window into the warder's bedroom was unblinded.

"Better get to sleep, Beast," said Swanker, in a friendly fashion, "you've got a jolly busy day before you to-morrow. You've got to face Grainer. He'll most likely wollop you. He's always down on the newcomers till their people grease his palm. Then you have to go into the shops and start work. Shoemaking is best, that is, till you get marked 'trustworthy' like me. Then you get promoted to the farm. That's best of all. Last, you've got to fight Smutty. He's older than you a bit, but I think you will surprise him. Don't let him come to grips, that's all. Then, he would smash you in no time!"

"But," said the Kid, glancing at the long rows of little iron beds, and the great glaring lantern above, "I can't get to sleep with that big lamp up there. Do they never put it out?"

"Never," said the Swanker, "and the sooner you learn to sleep with the light in your eyes the better. You've got five years of it—or at the least, three and three-quarters, if you turn out a prime first-class reformed article and the Cherokee takes you out with him to his farm in Canada!"

"Good-night, Swanker, and thank you!" said the Kid.

The boy in the next bed stared in astonishment.

"Well, you are a caution, Beast," he said in almost an affectionate tone. "I suppose it's the pedigree work that does it. One would think you had been at a toff's school, and worn a topper—fancy thanking ME! Why, nobody ever thanks anybody for anything at the 'Peat' Reformatory! So don't you do it, else you'll get welted—and that frequent!"

"I'll try to remember!" said the Kid. "But, you see, my father taught me when I was little. It's awkward to get out of!"

"What, the Knifer learned you to say 'Thank'ee'?"

"No, not the Knifer—my own real father, David McGhie, of Back Mill Lands!" said the Kid.

The Swanker uttered a snort of disgust.

"There have I been telling the boys all about your father—how he's Jackson—Knifer Jackson, mind you, and nobody else. You're having a jolly good start, mind you, along o' him. And don't you forget that, young Beast! Knifer Jackson's a good enough father for anybody in the old 'Peat.' Why, you are a credit to No. 7, and the other dormies are just sweatin' with rage. There'll be a fine row one o' them nights after prayers! And now to go and yarn about your own *real* father! Pah! Don't let me hear you at it again, that's all, young Beast!"

"I'll try to remember!" said the Kid, meekly. And so, after staring long at the barred windows and the naked light flaring and smelling high overhead, he dropped asleep. His first day as a reformatory boy was over.

CHAPTER XIII

SOME WALKS ON THE MOOR

"It's a little Commonwealth, you see—self-contained, self-centred, sufficient unto itself," said the assistant superintendent to his usual companion, after he had met her on the moor, by the little pond over which the tall green-black firs *whooed* and sighed all the short Scottish winter afternoons.

The young man was talking, as usual, about his beloved "Hearne Mackenzie," into which he had put his fortune, such as it was—without drawing from it a farthing beyond the £120 and free house, which was the living wage of the assistant superintendent.

"I know," he said, "I am not a very ambitious young man. Perhaps there are places where I could influence more people. But nowhere so directly. And two hundred boys of the criminal classes, or having alliances with them, need a man to look after them, and give them all his time. Well, I am that man!"

"I do not see," said Patricia, still unconvinced. "If you had agreed with your father, you might have had the means to build a score of reformatories such as this."

"Yes, and lost my own soul money-making!" said Mr. Hearne Mackenzie. "No," he went on hastily, as if he did not wish to argue the point—"I go my way—he goes his. We even appreciate one another, and I am glad to think that, at the election for assistant superintendent, when I was appointed, I had my father's vote!"

"It is certainly a pleasant thought," said Patricia, "that if I marry your father, I shall have so equal-minded and dutiful a son!"

With the least flutter of the eyelashes upward as she spoke, Patricia noted the effect of the appellation on the tall, grave, handsome young man who walked beside her.

Mr. Hearne Mackenzie winced palpably. At first he had entered into the jest, and it had been a continual source of amusement to them—this pretty girl with the dark clustering curls laid low on the neck, and the swarthy cavalier with the head like an antique design graven on a signet ring—to call each other "mother" and "son."

But somehow of late the jest had lost its flavour. Virtue had gone out of it, so far as Hearne Mackenzie was concerned. A young girl, a sweet girl, to wed a man thrice her age, and that man his father! It was a shame—just because she was heiress of the great old house of Boreham-Egham. Sometimes at night Hearne could not sleep for thinking of it, and would get up and wander out under the moon, or in the blacker dark, stumbling blindly over the face of the moorland, and—had the man not been his own father—he would have known what to do. The Indian strain told him that. Yet Patricia seemed to make no objection.

Still they continued to meet every day. In that gloomy winter landscape—the frost-bound peat bog, the dark upstanding pines that broke the force of the blast—her eyes shone like the fish-pools that are in Heshbon.

"*Oculi tui sicut piscinæ in Hesebon*," he used to repeat to himself; for he had been trained by the Jesuits in Montreal, and had read the Vulgate—"as the crystalline tanks of Heshbon"—so the Spaniards have it.

Anon he would be angry, and rage very furiously, and then be angry with himself for being angry. After

all, what affair was it of his? He had chosen his path in life, and all that remained for him was to tread it.

He was a fool, and knew it. Thrice a fool to let a girl without any heart, a girl who was willing to sell herself for a poor, worthless title, interfere with his life. This made him angriest of all. And, quite contrary to his nature, he raged out there, this swarthy, grave, melancholy assistant superintendent of the Hearne Mackenzie Reformatory.

. . . . .

Meanwhile Lord Athabasca came almost daily to the castle. He did not always see Patricia. The girl had a curious gift of vanishing. Hammer had ordered gamekeepers to keep a watch on her goings. But then Hammer was not a popular person outside the Castle of Egham, and was obeyed only with eye service. If Miss Patricia were seen walking with a young man, across the far-brown distances of the moor, or sauntering across the screen of the fir-tree glades, every maidservant in the house thought the more of her for it, and hoped that after all she would not have to marry that stout old lord who came to see her so regularly, under the protection and sanction of Hammer.

The situation was clearly enough understood, and the gardeners and foresters speculated in their boothies on how much Lord Athabasca, a liberal man on the shoot, would give Hammer for helping on his marriage. Ten thousand was the favourite figure, chiefly on account of the roundness of the sum. It was also an unusually correct estimate.

Meanwhile the formalities were proceeded with. Patricia McGhie became by poll deed Miss Patricia Egham Boreham-Egham, and her uncle signed formal acts of adoption and heirship. The wedding day was fixed for the twenty-fifth of February, and Lord Athabasca was to have his yacht—it was often mis-

taken for a liner—at Marseilles. My lady and her husband would set out at once for a long cruise among the Balearics and the Greek Isles.

> " For I would see before I die,
> The palms and temples of the South ! "

chanted Pat.

She did not think very much about Lord Athabasca. The only thing that bothered her was what she would say to him at meals—especially at breakfast the first morning. This troubled her somewhat. She resolved that she would get him to teach her Spanish, which both he and his son spoke like their mother tongue. That would always be an interest.

But little by little something rose up in the girl's heart—dinning constantly, not loud, but insistent. It said that if it had been—another—she would not have needed to think about subjects of conversation. For instance—Hearne Mackenzie !

So it was with her sister. So it would *not* be with herself. Away back there, behind the hills of the South, within sound of the Messan Water gurgling full with the winter rains, Marthe and Mr. Symington were happily engaged in house furnishing. Mr. P. Brydson McGhie had given Marthe £200 with a very curt blessing. Her mother had slipped another hundred out of her silent economies. Mr. Symington had laid aside another couple of hundreds. Marthe was a happy girl. All day long she was busied with a foot rule, and sheets on sheets of calculation—curtains, carpets, hangings. How much of this—how little of that ? There were few happier times for practical, housewifely, motherly little Marthe.

She missed Pat to " boss " her and, a little also, to say " Oh, Pat, how can you ? " to—when Pat came out with some of her wild sayings.

Patricia had come to Kirkmessan once or twice. But somehow she appeared to Marthe and Baby Lant to be older, sadder, and altogether another person.

"Heiressing doesn't seem to agree with you, Pat," said Baby Lant. "Why, what is the matter? Is it my lord? He is old, it is true—but you remember what you used to say of husbands—that the older they were, the more tender they would be, just like legs of mutton hung in the meat safe!"

"Oh, Baby Lant!" cried Marthe. "Remember, Patricia is going to marry Lord Athabasca. You should not speak like that!"

"Oh, bother," cried Baby Lant, fighting petulantly with the corner of a sofa cushion which she could not get to her mind, "Pat may do as she likes. She is an heiress now, in her own right, but she need not oppress her family beforehand with her greatness!"

And it shows the difference that had come over Patricia, that she took no part in the battle of words—in which, of course, Marthe found herself absurdly overmatched by Baby Lant. On the whole, Patricia's father and mother were satisfied with the change in their daughter.

"I knew Patricia would settle down," said her mother. "She is quite my lady already."

"It's a great thing that I have finished my family tree," said her father, "and that there only remains to wait for next year's issue of Sir Brian's 'Peerage, Baronetage, and Landed Gentry,' where my chiefship of the Clan McGhie will be fully admitted. I am having a copy of the whole account properly illuminated on vellum with all the armorial bearings, and it shall be my present to the bridegroom. I have ordered an ivory casket to contain it!"

But, secretly to her *fiancé*, Marthe mourned over her sister.

"Willie," she said, "I wish I could make Patricia out. She is going to marry this old man, and I just know she won't be happy with him. He is three times her age—and just fancy, he has a son older than she is—ten years older! He has quarrelled with him, too, and does not allow him a farthing. I don't think

it is at all nice, do you? By the way, what do you think I am going to have for the curtains of our room?"

"I don't know," said Willie, smiling happily. "Beams of cedar, rafters of fir, curtains of Solomon, I suppose!"

"Oh, no!" said heedless little Marthe. "You know very well that there *are* no rafters. But I've had the ceiling painted a nice light green to match the paper, and I'm going to have dimity curtains—dimity, Willie, think of it! Doesn't it recall all sorts of pleasant old country things to you—cottages, and lilac bushes, and girls called Prue and their sleeves rolled up, all baking bread, and 'Cranford,' and Maypoles—and—and——"

Marthe, who had been talking very fast—she was excited—stopped, completely out of breath. Then Willie, who had his moments of folly, as what good man has not, continued:

> "Dorothy and Dimity Caterwaul,
> They both went down to the Mew-sick Hall;
> But when they set up a feline wail,
> They were very soon lodged in Calton Jail!"

"Oh, Willie!" said Marthe, settling herself on—the chair—where else, if you please? "And you a minister! What would your people say?"

Marthe saw with hope before her a long future of exclamatory "Oh, Willies," which—can you blame her?—would to some extent make up for the loss of Patricia, or, if not exactly for losing her, at least for finding her encased in the great lady, as her mother had petrified into her brown brocade.

"Oh, Willie!" said little dimple-chinned Marthe, taking her lover by both ears, "I am so glad we are poor, if being rich makes people like what Patricia was the other day—or like father and that dreadful old lord Pat is going to marry. Aren't you glad we are poor, Willie?"

"Well, I am reasonably and moderately glad, Marthe," said Willie. "If we were twice as rich, I think I could bear it, by sitting up at nights to strengthen my mind. But if it were three times——"

"Now," said Marthe, "you are laughing at me, you bad boy. And I'll run away. You always do laugh at me, and I don't think it's fair. But, oh, Willie, I am *so* glad that you are not old nor rich nor horrid—aren't you?"

"On these personal matters," said Mr. Symington, gravely, "it becomes a modest man to be silent."

"You modest!" cried laughing Marthe. "Well, I like that! Who puts on a clean shirt and collar and tie for every week-night service? Answer me that!"

"Oh, but," said her betrothed, "that's your fault, Marthe. It's just because you are always there in the front row of the choir. But after—well, one change of linen will last me a week!"

"What!" cried Marthe, up in arms at once. "And have them all saying how you are not well looked after when you are married! They look fearfully particularly at a minister, you know. And those Miss Isbisters that have always—oh, yes they have—the hateful minxes! They are regular nasty catty old maids! But they shan't say I don't dress you properly. Yes, and I'll always see that you have your nicest cuff links on, and—and——"

And so on—a great deal more, in fact, all out of the speaking abundance of Marthe's simple, clean, loving little heart. And happily the man was like unto her.

God keep them ever so simple and hopeful and loving, even though Mistress Marthe does not quite get over all her little spleens—they are very little—against the "catty" Misses Isbister, whom she will never quite forgive for once on a time setting their caps at her handsome husband. As, indeed, when you come to think of it, why should she?

So they were married. And, on the whole, lived happily ever after.

Marthe once married, Patricia returned to Egham Castle with a lightened heart. There would be no heiressing for Marthe's sake, and as for Baby Lant—well, as in her own case, Baby Lant could look out for herself.

Atalanta had shown no signs as yet of throwing the handkerchief. But when she did there would be plenty of people ready to pick it up. So much Patricia had always known. But her talks with her younger sister on the eve of the marriage—Marthe's—had shown her the truth. Baby Lant was a wonderfully pretty girl, and of a heart altogether untouched.

"It's you that should be the heiress," said Pat more than once to her sister. "You would not in the least mind marrying an old man with a title and yachts and things!"

"Oh, yes, I should," said Baby Lant, cozying down on her sister's shoulder to be petted. "I would rather have half a dozen people about me, any one of whom I can marry if I like—than be compelled to marry any particular one whether I like it or no!"

Which, though spoken in Baby Lant's sleepily light way, still touched the essence of the matter.

The day of the twenty-fifth of February was a great one on the Egham estates. Lord Athabasca's property lay at some little distance, and was scarcely touched by the loyalty, generations old, with which the Egham tenants, long anchored to their holdings, greeted the marriage of their heiress to a real lord with a real title. His age was hardly held to be a disadvantage.

"Sixty-five, is he?" said one of the old goodwives. "Ah, well, he'll no last lang wi' a young wife, mark my words! But she'll thrive on't. And then—when they hae laid him awa' decent-like in a coffin—certes, whatna bonnie young widow she will mak'!"

The Hammers were to receive their agreed amount on the morning of the day itself—£10,000 in a cheque

payable to bearer for the safe delivery of one heiress, warranted sound in wind and limb, and embellished with the legal and spotless names of Patricia McGhie Egham Boreham-Egham, daughter of Patrick Brydson McGhie, Esq., J.P., chief of that name, also niece and heiress of Philip Egbert Egham Boreham-Egham, of Egham Castle.

That was considered a pretty good match for a recently made colonial peer, who had formerly been wedded to a Red Indian squaw!

CHAPTER XIV

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON MAW MOSS

Across the wide brown and gray spaces of Maw Moss a little persistent black thing pushed its way. It appeared either a man or an ant, according to the distance and elevation from which you viewed it. Its stolid persistence in a direct line belonged to one or the other. Now there are common black ants, and black ants which look as if they wore soft hats and walked with a stick and a stoop.

But ants do not pull up on a knoll top and solace themselves with a look at the landscape. Nor do they mop their heated brows with red handkerchiefs. These things this particular black thing did. Also, if the ant meets a fir tree or a fallen rock *en route* he does not go round, but climbs up one side and down the other. If another ant is coming the opposite way he invariably butts his head against him. Then the pair rise up on their hind legs and fight it out. These things this black thing did *not* do.

Therefore the black thing was a man, not an ant.

It was, in fact, Mr. Molesay, city missionary, on the track of a parishioner, transplanted to another and a better world—that is to say, the Kid, not removed to a cemetery or "planted out" in a graveyard, as he would have said himself, but established in the Hearne Mackenzie Home Colony Reformatory, a spot where Mr. Molesay often found waifs and strays who had whizzed off centrifugally from his mission in the Cowgate. They were generally attached to a snapping, punching, shoemaking machine, cross legged on a tailoring board, or, if they were specially

lucky and "trustworthy," out in the fields which, under the fostering care of the assistant superintendent, were growing every day in size and importance about the colony which his money had built and his self-sacrifice tended.

Mr. Molesay—for obscure family reasons not Archibald but Archbold Molesay—found Maw Moss a very wide place. There seemed an unconscionable and ridiculous amount of waste sky above it, to one who for twenty years had been accustomed to a narrow irregular jag of blue or gray seen between the chimneys and the tall houses of the over-city, actually built on top of the Cowgate.

"God, God, God!" said Mr. Molesay, looking up with his hat off. "That is God, they say, that cold blue space in which the clouds sail so silently. If it were so, we in the Cowgate would have little chance. For we cannot see Him, only a handbreadth of dirty smoke, a black smutty shelter tent from which the rain comes plumping down with a *skoosh*! 'THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU—*the Kingdom of God is within you!*'"

Archbold Molesay repeated low to himself his favourite text, and shaded his eyes from the glare of that vast expanse of sky. He pulled the broad soft brim of his hat lower down, and in doing so he became aware of a second human being not very far away. There was a little peat stack, "like a bing of paving stones when they mend a street," thought the city missionary, and by it, seated on a "tummock" of rough moorish bent, was a girl, her head in her hands, sobbing.

"My business!" said little Mr. Molesay, looking at the girl a moment. He could not see her very clearly. He was short sighted, and made a poor hand at getting over country in a district criss-crossed with twenty-foot peat hags. But, nevertheless, he was at her side in a moment. Such was his reason for being.

The girl did not hear him coming. Peat coomb and growing moss deaden sounds. So does grief

which rends the heartstrings. Suddenly Patricia looked up. She felt a hand laid on her shoulder. It made her violently angry to think that anyone should intrude, especially—the thought jerked in her heart like a trap springing—Hearne Mackenzie!

But it was not Hearne Mackenzie. Far otherwise, indeed, only a little man with shining kindly eyes, the eyes that all very godly men of whatever creed acquire as their certificate and earthly reward, and a head like dulled silver. He held his hat in his hand, and in the fierce sunshine of the wide moor, she saw that his coat was shiny and his trousers "kneed." But there was that upon the face of Archbold Molesay which made whatever he did right. She let his hand remain on her shoulder—long, thin fingers that never did any harder work than play a little harmonium, sometimes on the street, sometimes in the evening meetings indoors when the voluntary lady organist happened for some reason to be absent.

"My child," he said, "I do not know you, but you are in sorrow, in trouble. I have helped many. Perhaps I can help you."

Patricia looked at Archbold Molesay with that straight, piercing regard before which lies dissolved, like oxidisation on a penny dropped into an acid bath. She saw in a moment that he took her for a poor girl, in her plain black morning frock and sailor hat.

"You have some one you are interested in, over there, at the reformatory?" he asked, his eyes keeping their still, almost divine kindliness. It is a thing certain that the Carpenter's Son spoke thus to the woman they brought him, that time when He said, "Neither do I condemn thee!"

"I have two, over there," said Patricia, sadly; "two in whom I am much interested. But——" here she hesitated. She did not like to say outright, "But who are you?" He spoke with authority, this man. Archbold Molesay smiled.

"No," he answered gently the thought as he saw it pass the windows of her eyes, "I am not a priest. I am not a minister. Though again, perhaps I am both. I have at least given all my life to teaching men the Way, as I know it," he added, hastily.

"Ah," she cried, "if only I knew the way!"

The cry was wrung from her. It was a real appeal, as natural as that which accompanies actual physical pain. Archbold Molesay, the security of his message upon him, sat down beside the girl. Queen's daughter or strange woman, all were as much one to him as they had been to his Master.

"Tell me!" he commanded, speaking softly, yet with the power of one who was not accustomed to be disobeyed.

"Tell me first who you think I am—what you imagine me to be?" said Patricia, looking at him.

The little silver-headed man sketched a motion with his hand, which signified clearly that who or what this woman who wept was, or what she had done, weighed with him not so much as one of these fairy gossamer threads the wind was wafting across the moor, glinting pearl pink in the morning light.

In his heart of hearts Mr. Molesay thought the girl a mourning sister, or perhaps even—such things he had known—a child-mother with a prodigal boy already shut up within these great walls of red brick which Hearne Mackenzie had reared. But nothing of this appeared on the face of the little missionary.

"My Master sent me to meet you, here and to-day," he said, with quiet certainty, "else why am I sitting with you behind this erection of peat bricks? Tell you who I am, who you are? What does it matter? For me, I am Archbold Molesay, missionary to the poor in the great city yonder. And I, too, have some that interest me in *there!*"

He pointed to the solemn lines of the "Hearne Mackenzie," the most modern and successful institution for reclaiming wrong-going boys in the world.

Now, I know not what took hold of Patricia at that moment. Perhaps it was that unknown something deep down in the heart of every woman, which prompts her to confess to the man who summons her to speak out in the name of God. She may know little of God, and nothing at all of the man. No matter! In her heart there is the thrill of an appeal.

"Speak, my child! I and God are listening!" said Archbold Molesay.

And, against all belief, against all probability, Patricia spoke.

. . . . .

What she said she cannot now recall. She tried to keep out names. Certainly she did not reveal her own, nor yet that of Lord Athabasca. The meek silver head nodded at each point. Nothing was missed. Archbold Molesay now and then interjected a question, but not many. Patricia was too accustomed to use her tongue to leave anything essential out of her narrative.

"Ah," said Mr. Molesay, when she had finished, "thank God, the wickedness is yet to do! And it shall *not* be done. You remember the wise saying of the worldly, 'Do not worry about what you can't help—*you can't help it!* Neither worry about that which you *can* help—go and help it!' So now I say, *help it!* To marry that man because of money, or position, or on account of your family, would be an iniquity. But it is not done yet. Nor must it!"

"And what, then, must I do?" Patricia asked meekly, looking right over the bowed glistening head of the little city missionary, across the wide spaces of the sunlit moor. "What must I do?"

Little Mr. Molesay studied a moment. Perhaps he consulted the speaking voice of that "Kingdom of God" which, according to his reading of divine things, abode within every human breast. At any rate it was a moment or two that he rested so, with averted eyes half-closed, seeing the inner vision.

Then rising up, still uncovered, he spoke briefly and clearly, in short, authoritative sentences. It was now Patricia's turn to look straight at him. "Yes!" she said, promising at each point, nodding also to show that she understood.

"Yes! Yes! Yes!" She had no thought of refusing, any more than if he had been an angel from heaven.

"So, then," he concluded, "good-bye till the morning of the twenty-fifth! I will meet the early train. It will be dark. Here is my card with my address. Write what you will to me. God be with you, my child!"

And thus came the Kingdom of God upon Maw Moss, in a clear, glittering day of winter when even the curlews had deserted it for the tidal flats of the Firth. It came not with observation, but—as usual—with a still, small voice. And it came to stay. Henceforth Patricia McGhie had something to live for—first of all, of course, the morning of the twenty-fifth.

. . . . .

On the whole, Mr. Molesay had a harder job with the Rev. Harry Rodgers, minister of the Peden Memorial Church, Cowgate. You see, Mr. Molesay was a bachelor, and, therefore, in the matter of Patricia he had to have recourse to his friend the clergyman, who demanded reasons, and to these again, reasons annexed.

"I have no patience with you, Molesay," said the Rev. Harry Rodgers, pacing up and down his confined study, lined with the Fathers in vellum and the Puritans in dull-brown calf-skin rows. "As if you had not enough to do here. And yet in addition you must take on your hands a young woman you don't know——"

"Do you or I know any of the people we give a leg over the stile to?" said Mr. Molesay, with a sigh. "Do we even know them after they are over?"

"That has nothing whatever to do with it," said the Rev. Harry Rodgers, quickly. "This is serious, Molesay, and I must think. You say that this young lady—I will assume that she is a lady——"

"Your wife will tell you that in a moment!" said Mr. Molesay, with a gentle tinkle of irony in his voice.

"I will assume that she is all you say," said the minister, "though bachelors are easily taken in. And I will assume further that all her statements, though unchecked, are true. But what does that amount to? This, so far as I can see, the young lady has, to oblige her family, agreed to marry a man of higher rank than her own, three times her age, while in the meantime her affections are bestowed upon another——"

"*What's all this, Harry?*"

A small, bead-eyed, orbicular Japanesy woman with very smooth hair swooped into the room, rather than entered it. She had the oil-can of a sewing machine in her hand, and she was in search of the wherewithal to fill it. She had searched every available place and as a last resource she attacked her husband's study. There was the very bottle, marked "Singer" in large letters, on the mantelpiece itself.

"Harry, you've had it for your bicycle again," she cried in reproachful accents, "and after what you promised, too!"

"Laura," he said, "I forgot—I did, indeed!"

The Reverend Harry does not quote the patristic fathers to this little woman with the bright eyes. He knows better. That bottle of sewing-machine oil now in the sloe-pupiled woman's hands is worth all the systematic divinity of twenty centuries, so far as proof, trial, and sentence are concerned.

"And what was that I heard?" she continued, boarding her husband with a hot pretty vehemence. "Out with it! Some of your megrims and scruples! What was it that Mr. Molesay said *I* would understand

in a moment, and you were arguing about? Come, out with it, or I'll find out for myself!"

And she shook the bottle of Singer's machine oil —warranted fluid in any climate—in his very face.

"It was a young lady," Rodgers murmured, resolved to make a clean breast of it. "A young lady whom Molesay wants to bring here."

"Here—where—to this house?" queried the little woman, her tone altering as quick as a flash.

Mr. Molesay nodded. Then he smiled and waved his hand to Rodgers. "Let me tell it," he said. "I know the facts better. I had the story from the young lady herself." And he related Patricia's parlous case.

On Mrs. Rodgers it had quite a different effect from that upon her husband.

"Of course she shall come!" she cried with enthusiasm. "Who could doubt it? She shall be as my own sister. Marry that old dotterer—never, if I can help it! And I don't see that she's done anything wrong either! And if she had—why, they made her, with all their foolery about heiress-ships and titles. Besides, how was she to know she was going to meet the other—oh, he must be nice! Of course, she shall come here! Fill the oil-can, Harry. Mr. Molesay, that's all settled."

But whether it was the filling of the oil-can which was settled, or the advent of Patricia at the Peden Memorial Manse, remained, so far as the vivid little woman's words were concerned, in a state of uncertainty.

Mr. Molesay, however, departed well satisfied, and waited for the twenty-fifth of February with a tranquil heart. That is, he had too many other things on his mind to let himself be overmuch disturbed about any one of them. There was Billy Earsman, for instance, who wanted to know what he must do with Kate, his wife, who threatened to fall into a decline with fretting about her little Polly, in spite

of the fine funeral and the singing in the choir. This was a disappointment to the city missionary, who had thought that affair settled, once for all, so soon as he heard Kate Earsman's first solo after Leo Morse had taken her in hand.

Then there was also Ogg, king of Bashan and landlord of the "British Imperial," who was like to lose his licence. In which case much worse might happen. The local shebeens would be reopened. Drinking would be done in secret Burke-and-Hare kens instead of being policed by Billy Earsman and the aforesaid Ogg, king of Bashan—strong men both. A larger percentage than usual of his flock had been in the dock that week, upon the usual charges, "D. and D.," "resisting in the discharge," "causing to assemble," and so on—just the daily round, the common task, nothing more.

Archbold Molesay, had, in truth, enough to do. He saw the district inspectors of police. He even interviewed the great Henderland, not yet retired on his well-deserved pension. Of set purpose he visited at the prison in the Calton many closely shaven heads, and being there he was asked to look in and see various others. All the time he remained the same—a little, timorous, undaunted man, with a head that glistened with the sheen of good silver plate, so good that the butler is afraid to polish it.

At last the twenty-fifth of February arrived. And with his chin buried in the raised collar of his worn overcoat, Mr. Molesay waited on the wind-thrashed quays of the great Abbotsford Station, under the changeful bluish dither of the electrics, for the train due from the south at 6.15 a.m.

There was a man to be hanged aloft yonder in the big quadrangle of the prison, and little Mr. Molesay had been most of the night up with him. Already curious folk were arriving from different parts of the city, perching on rails and walls to see the black flag go up as St. Giles tolled his eight strokes, when

a man's strong-beating life would go out like an over-snuffed candle.

But as to that Mr. Molesay had now no care. The man up there, the man who had done that thing, knew all that Mr. Molesay knew. And if he abode with him he might be tempted "to lean on the creature," as Mr. Molesay expressed it, instead of passing on his way to find himself face to face with the Forgiver of sins concerning whom Mr. Molesay had told him. Nevertheless, Mr. Molesay, adrift on the cold quays, where an east wind, dry and withering, seemed almost to blow the solid freestone flagging underfoot into grains of sand, sent a prayer up in the direction of the Calton Prison.

Then he bent himself as best he might to help the next of human kind who needed him. This was Patricia.

She had not awaked upon the morning of her marriage day. Rather, she rose from an unslept-in bed ready dressed for her venture. She had had, since her meeting with Mr. Molesay, one friend in Egham Castle—even little Kate Earsman, wife of Billy. Mr. Molesay, in accordance with his usual plan, had made "one hand wash another," which in this case meant that one good work of necessity and mercy could often be performed so as to include another and a lesser good.

And the greater good of Patricia—alone in that great castle, abandoned by her own, sold by the Hammers to the highest bidder, and with only a couple of skinny automata for responsible relatives —went along with the good of little Kate Earsman, now her maid, still mourning for Polly, and with this single chance of distraction and country air.

Now there were doubtless wiser little men, according to the flesh, than Mr. Archbold Molesay, city missionary. But somewhere in his frail personality there must have been hidden one infallible instinct of a great general. He provided against eventualities.

It could not be said that Mr. Molesay actually foresaw that Kate Earsman, in the freedom of the Egham servants' hall, could have found the proof of the base transaction to which Lord Athabasca had allowed himself to become a party. Yet she did. She heard the rumour that her mistress, Miss Patricia McGhie Egham Boreham-Egham, was to be married to the old lord, the most constant visitor at the castle, and that for this, on the marriage day itself, the Hammers, husband and wife, were to receive the sum of £10,000. But it was not till one day in the hall, fiercely brushing Lord Athabasca's overcoat, with the neck down, that a sheaf of papers fell from the inner breast pocket. And among them—Kate had no delicacy as to examining them—she found the pencilled minute of the agreement with the Hammers, terms, date and all.

This Kate retained in her own hands, for there was no saying what Patricia in a fit of Quixotry, might not do. Kate felt that, if things happened crosswise, such a weapon would be far better in her hands, or in those of her husband, Billy, the "bully" of Ogg, king of Bashan, than in those of a simple girl. It was no use giving all the advantages to the evildoers, thought this brave little Kate, any more than, in mission work, it is right that the devil should have all the good tunes.

CHAPTER XV

THE TRAPPED TIGER

But this part of the story must begin on Patricia's marriage morning in the castle of Egham. She was not the only one awake in the great gaunt castle. Algernon Hammer, also, could not sleep that night. He took out the slip of paper with "ten thousand pounds" written on it in the clean-curved American mercantile flourish which has reached across the St. Lawrence. Then the figures in the corner, prettily exact, as if my lord had been copy-setting, £10,000, how beautiful it looked! Now there would be no fumbling with pints of ale, no wrangling with doubtfully paying guests in a public bar—nothing but the ten thousand well and safely invested—"a little farm well tilled, a little wife well willed," he hummed. He was thinking of Marigh, and however the farm might be tilled, Mr. Hammer had no doubts concerning the excellence of Marigh's will power.

At twelve of the clock that day! Marriages—what were marriages? Marigh would attend to that. What he would do would be to take the early train to Edinburgh, disembark on the platform of the Abbotsford Station at 6.15 a.m. And after that, lurking unseen, await the opening of the bank. That would be at ten—not a minute before. He must catch the morning train, for otherwise he could not very well be seen leaving the castle at an early hour on such a day. Marigh would see that all was right. She would make his excuses—the dentist—he had been taken sharply ill. It was a severe

disappointment to him not to be all day on the spot —that day, so pregnant with possibilities to the house of Boreham-Egham, which he had served so long and so faithfully. He would, however, be back in time for the marriage ceremony itself. Of that there could be no doubt.

So at the little moorland station of Kingside, where the south train was in the habit of stopping for a drink of water, three passengers mounted—two into the first-class, women they, thickly veiled and deeply cloaked. Then after lingering till the very last moment in the dusk of the unlighted waiting room, only a degree less bleak than the moor outside, a man with his face hidden, made a dash for a third-class compartment, fell over the legs of a sleeping man, was cursed freely, and finally settled himself in the least conspicuous corner. It was Mr. Algernon Hammer, who occupied himself rubbing his shins with one hand, while with the other he made sure that the precious cheque was safe in the innermost pocket of his waistcoat.

True, Lord Athabasca had said he would inform his bankers that the cheque was not payable till afternoon that day, by which time Lord Athabasca would assuredly have changed his estate from that of widower back to that of married man. But then my lord was in love with a dashing young heiress, the handsomest in the country. And Mr. Hammer thought it likely, on the principle that there are no fools like old fools, that my lord would have forgotten to give any such instructions to his bankers. In which the knowing Algernon had indeed argued perfectly correctly. The cheque would have been paid that day at the big palace of Mammon on the Mound at ten of the clock, that is, but for one thing.

And that small hindrance had nothing at all to do with my Lord Athabasca, who was to arrive with his bridegroom's party at the appointed hour of half-past ten, to find a distracted Mrs. Hammer,

an immensely excited Philip Egbert, a Mrs. Philip apparently fainting and coming to again with the regularity of clockwork. But—the bird had flown!

Algernon Hammer was so taken up with his cheque and its safety that no suspicion crossed his mind till the whole party disembarked on the wind-blown spaces of the Abbotsford South Station. Then, as he happened to be in the last carriage of the train, he had perforce to pass the compartment from which Patricia, her face flicked to faint rose with the teasing Easter, was descending, and for the first time in her life giving her hand to a man as she did so. The man, of course, was Mr. Archbold Molesay, of the Cowgate Mission.

"Oh, no—of course not," she was saying, "*he* knew nothing about it—no one knew except Kate Earsman."

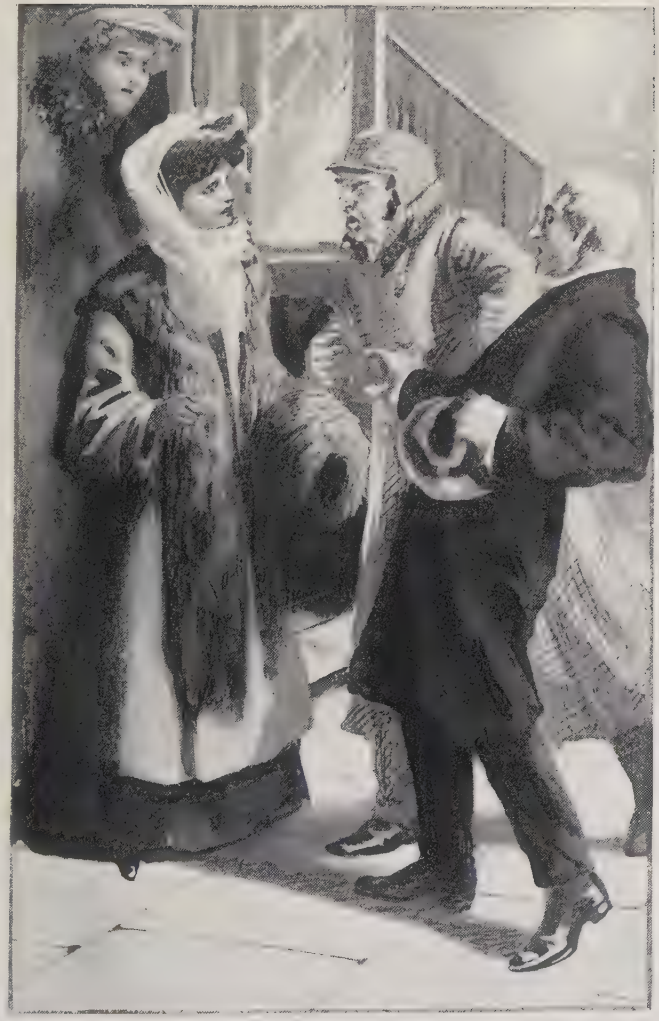
Then Mr. Algernon Hammer, forgetting the precious contents of his inner waistcoat pocket, descended upon the runaways with a perfect shriek of despair.

"Miss Patricia," he cried, "what are you doing here at this moment? What? What? What? You must instantly return. I will compel you. Where are the police? I will telegraph to Mr. Boreham-Egham—to your father. He is now at the castle—to your brother. And this man—get out of my way, sir!"

And being strengthened by sudden blinding despair, he gave little Mr. Molesay a swing that sent him staggering against the nearest tall post of the electric light.

"*Billy!*" cried Kate Earsman, lifting a hand like a signalman. For far down the shadowy, winking platform, from which the lights were dropping away, fewer and fewer, at that dead time of the morning before the London expresses were due, she had seen a figure she knew well. "Billy! Billy, I want you!"

And upon the word, Billy Earsman heaved himself



"MISS PATRICIA, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? YOU MUST INSTANTLY RETURN."

forward, as big as any three men there—barring, perhaps, the stately master of the Abbotsford Station himself.

"What's up?" he inquired.

His wife hurriedly explained, and Billy looked about with an abrupt and ugly squaring of the jaw. The Kingside engine was, of course, not one of the big "through" engines, but a "short-distance local," and on her, busy with a wisp of waste, was a man whom Billy knew. Indeed, there were few men on the south side of the city whom Billy did not know, or at least who did not know Billy.

"Jackie," he said, "give me a hurl with this joker. He wants to bother the wife—ye ken my Kate, her that sings the hymns—and this young leddy. What'll we do with him?"

The short-distance driver scratched his head. It was "clean again' regulations," of course. That went without saying. But then he owed many a good turn to Billy, the right-hand man of Ogg, aforesaid king of Bashan.

"Fetch him on board, Billy," he said, at last. "Faith, we will run him doon to Sant Margaret's. The boys will find him a warm shop to content himsel' in. Botherin' Kate, your wife, was he? He deserves to hae the ugly heid knockit aff his shoothers. What for dinna ye do it, Billy?"

"Ower mony poliss aboot," said Billy, looking down the long vistas of the platform; "and, besides, it wad mess Maister Paton's nice clean flags!"

"Aweel, they're nane sae particular doon at Sant Margaret's!" said the driver, putting his hand on the starting lever. "Gie him a heave amang the coals."

"Doon yonder they'll rivet a man up in a biler for twa gallon o' Usher's best! Keep still, my mannie! Dinna be fear't—ye will be drooned lang before ye are boilt. They say it's no a painfu' daith. But, look here, Billy, dinna tell the Sant Margaret's men

aboot Kate, or they will be for startin' the fires o' the Flyin' Scotsman wi' him. He looks fine an' brosy. He wad burn weel, juist like backin' the fire wi' creesh!"

They took him down in that intractable gray of the morning, which is darker than the dark of midnight, through a murk of tunnels, past the yellow wink of many gas lamps, the brassy reek of naphtha flares, to where there were digging operations going on for the new station. They left the electrics far behind, the high-bunched kaleidoscopes of the signals standing long aloft in the west. They delivered Algernon Hammer, shaking, and much afraid, in a darksome place, to a gang of brawny giants who worked under a naked arc light which changed its "pitch" every quarter of a minute. These men ran little waggons into a black hole, a wet, greasy, unsatisfactory hole in the ground.

Billy Earsman explained to his prisoner—things which gave Billy great pleasure. Algernon offered fabulous sums of money. Hundreds and hundreds of pounds! If he had offered half a sovereign he might have had a better chance. But as the morning broke, the St. Margaret's men pushed him into the excavation, which, frozen outside, was drippy and warm within. They gave him a pick and they told him to dig. When he indignantly refused, Mr. Hammer became aware that the makers of the new tunnel wore No. 12 tacketty boots and, desiring no more knowledge, he grasped the pick and struck his first stroke of honest manual labour.

But the morning was passing. As Algernon's pick rose and fell, and he felt the blisters slowly "hoving" themselves on his soft palms, his watch ticked in his pocket relentlessly. High over head, some hundreds of feet, a man's life, taken by his fellow men, was passing into the Whither, just as if he had been a saint, a confessor, or a martyr. A black flag was raised and a deep sigh went over the

city—at least over that part within eyeshot of the ultimatum of human justice.

Presently it was ten o'clock. Algernon knew this because the navvies had a spell, and Billy Earsman, that man great in the world of them that draw the beer-pull and turn about for the spirit bottle as it stands on its glittering row, had mysteriously procured for them the wherewithal to eat and drink and smoke.

Ten o'clock! And the bank on the Mound would be opening. Horror! Mr. Hammer made a rush, only to be tripped up, and asked if he meant to get himself hurt—informed, also, that fellows who did not know how to behave to decent married women had much better do very exactly as they were told. They might, for instance, happen to get covered up in a "slide," or their heads broken in a "roof fall." It sometimes happened so in driving a tunnel. Generally, too, it happened to "bad men" like Mr. Algernon Hammer, and though, of course, they would be sorry, owing to his having been brought there by such good chums as Driver Jackie and Ogg, king of Bashan's Billy—still, when a thing like that happens, as it were, it comes to pass once for all. And there is nothing more to be said. Except to contract for the coffin. And sometimes even that is unnecessary.

It was at five minutes to three that day, according to the big, silent, official timepiece of the bank on the Mound, when into the busy hush and brass-bound wicker-work reserve of the business room rushed a strange figure. It was Algernon Hammer, controller of the high, the low, and the middle justice, over at Egham Castle. Only one coal-black whisker remained. The other had been scorched off, none knew exactly how. He was dripping with wet, though the day remained dry, chill, straw twirling, Edinburghish. His clothes were in tatters of rags. *But* he had a cheque for £10,000 in his hand.

The paying teller, clean shaven, east windy, Edinburghish himself, glanced casually at the long, narrow oblong of bank paper, then up at a list pinned against the woodwork at his side. He never once looked at Algernon Hammer. He was not paid for that.

"This cheque was stopped at five minutes past twelve to-day!" he said, as calmly as the big clock ticking.

But before he could hand back the cheque, Algernon Hammer had fallen fainting on the floor.

. . . . .

Meanwhile Mrs. Harry Rodgers was indulging in the luxury, purely feminine, of "a good cry." All real women enjoy that as one of their greatest pleasures. The others—well, they edit papers, speak at meetings, and generally make themselves objectionable. But because they don't cry as a luxury, men don't take to them, somehow. Strange, but true!

Mrs. Harry Rodgers's good cry was aided and abetted by Patricia. She told her story, and sometimes, mostly out of sympathy, cried a little also. This showed merely that there was no ill feeling. Then they kissed, and generally cheered each other up. They were having "a lovely time" when the Reverend Harry came in, and with him Mr. Molesay.

If it had only been her husband, at such a luxurious time, Mrs. Harry Rodgers would have made remarkably short work of his intrusion. But Mr. Molesay, having a stake in the country, as it were, deserved and must receive somewhat more considerate treatment.

"Archbold Molesay," she cried, "how dare you? Not kiss a girl like that, and you old enough to be her father? If you won't, I'll make Harry do it. Just to show how welcome she is among us! It isn't much to do! There! I do believe you never kissed a woman before, blushing like that! What, not since your hair was gray! Well, more shame to

you, coming here four or five times a week and seeing how happy we are, Harry and I!"

This speech of Mrs. Harry Rodgers's was a little mixed, as most of the dear lady's were. But it implied and included a good deal more than it expressed. Also, it called up various emotions in the breast, the highly unaccustomed breast, of little silver-haired, low-voiced Mr. Molesay.

Pat had no objections to kissing such a man, "such a dear little man" was her mental reservation. She was sure *he* wouldn't mind, no, of course not. It would not have mattered if he had. It was none of his business. Here Patricia sighed, the why unspecified even to herself.

"I do not at all agree with you as to her stopping in," said Mrs. Harry Rodgers. "Who ever comes here, down into the Cowgate? They look at us as a curious spectacle. You can see a crowd all day and half the night staring down at us through the grilles of the bridges, as if we were negroes or Hottentots. Like the angels Harry talks about, they may look, but they mustn't touch. They don't interfere. They never *think* of interfering with us. We would stew in our own juice from one year's end to another, if it were not for the casual policeman, and the well-dressed-and-bred children who throw orange peel at us from 'up above.' Sometimes, once in a hundred Christmases, Santa Claus comes to fill our stockings, but generally those up there only—*spit on us!*"

Somewhat mildly, her husband objected to the forcefulness of his wife's remarks. But Mrs. Harry was not in the least abashed, and indeed in the breast of the good minister of the Peden Memorial there rankled a feeling that those, who, like himself, worked in the city slums, were left very much alone, to sink or swim according to the freedom of their own wills.

The day wore on. Mr. Molesay went about his work without having carried out his proposition that

he should go to Egham Castle and tell Patricia's father what had become of his daughter.

The two men voted aye; the two women, no. The noes, being thus in an immense majority, carried it by acclamation. So Mr. Molesay stayed at home.

"The idea!" cried Mrs. Harry, with quite unusual vehemence—which is saying not a little—"to go out there—and have the whole Egham pack in full cry! We would never get her mind quiet at all. Of course her sisters will know just what has become of her. They would have done the same in her place. Her brothers won't care, and as for her father——"

"Oh, I know! you needn't shake 'Laura, I'm surprised at you' over me, Harry. You are not surprised in the least. I know what you are going to say—all about 'honour thy father' and so on. And so I did, dear old man. But *he* never spent his time fiddle-faddling about pedigrees. It was all he could do to keep us in potatoes! No, I won't hush!"

Patricia laughed. It eased things, that laugh.

"I wish I had known your father, Mrs. Rodgers," she said, sighing a little.

"Tut, call me Laura," cried the little almond-eyed woman. "We've sunk so low down here that we actually call each other by our Christian names on the least provocation or none at all."

Then, in the gloaming, just when the casual newsboy was beginning his war whoop about "speeshul edeeshun" in best Cowgateese—for there is no quarter in the city of windy spaces so impoverished that it cannot afford a halfpenny for an evening paper—little Kate Earsman dropped in.

Billy, it seemed, had come back with a tale—oh, such a tale! A tale, which, on the face of it, had better not be told to Archbold Molesay and Harry Rodgers, regulars in the ranks, in the forefront of the fighting line. All the same, a tale which immensely amused Patricia and Laura. For good women, children,

and savages like their humour spread on with a trowel. Jack, cutting the bean stalk so that the bad giant might tumble down and break his crown, is about their size.

The defeat—the downfall—of Controller Hammer, his reception at the bank, his carrying off to the hospital, his rapid recovery there, and hurried exit were all greatly to the taste of the women concerned. For Patricia had suffered many things at the hands of Algernon Hammer.

Kate Earsman wiped her eyes as she told it. Her Billy was the hero of it all. The telling had done her good like a precious medicine from the Cowgate Dispensary. The only point where she went beyond the appreciation of her patronesses was when she told them, as an additional stroke of humour, that after the beast of prey was stricken down on the floor of the bank by the sudden knowledge that all his wiles were useless, he had called out, "Oh, what will Marigh say?" as he was coming to himself in the cab which bore him along Forrest Road to the accident ward.

But to Kate's surprise both Laura and Patricia agreed that they thought the better of Algernon Hammer for thinking of his wife at such a time.

"Oh, he was just feared o' what she would say to him!" said Kate Earsman who also had her own griefs. But Patricia and Mrs. Rodgers remarked that affection for the tigress is no shame to the tiger, especially when he finds himself taken in the snare.

. . . . .

Meantime Egham Castle had been the scene of events no less remarkable, if somewhat less varied and romantic, than the adventures of Controller Hammer under the guidance of Billy Earsman and Driver Jackie.

From early morning the whole place had been in an uproar, chiefly owing to the fact that its lord and

master could not dress himself, could not adjust his pads, pull his straps, fix and dress his wig, choose his stock, propel himself to his place, and settle him for the day with yesterday's *Times* and a volume of the *Gentleman's Magazine* ready to his hand. It was most inconsiderate of Hammer. Philip Egbert Egham Boreham-Egham could never have believed it of Hammer. And on a day like that, above all, when there was company in the house—McGhies and people like that—besides my Lord Athabasca coming over at half-past ten.

Philip Egbert's wife came in with apologies—the apologies of Mrs. Hammer. As arranged, Hammer had been suddenly taken in the night with a violent toothache—so violent that it required an immediate visit to the dentist in the city. He had started early, so as to be back in time to give the necessary cares to his master.

Then Mr. Boreham-Egham took the sulks. Yes, great man as he was, the fruit of a family tree whose roots were in Noah the navigator and Adam the day labourer, Philip Egbert took the sulks. He was so emphatically in the pet that he refused to stir out of his room, but sat in a chair before the fire in a scarlet dressing gown and flannel trousers, cursing fate and Algernon Hammer—Hammer the faithless, the once attached, the now forever anathematised controller of Egham.

He was thus engaged when he received the news of what for the moment appeared to him a far lesser grief.

The bride had disappeared!

Annoying, certainly! But, after all, what was that to a man who could not perform the first necessities of the toilette for himself, and who might have to appear at one of the most important events which had ever taken place at Egham Castle in—shame sat on his brow at the thought—in flannel trousers and a scarlet dressing gown!

"Miss Patricia can't be found, sir!"

It was William, the under-butler, who brought the news. William, usually something of a favourite, had to fly from the wrath of the padless, hairless, stayless thing in the scarlet dressing gown, which, as one might say, represented all that was mortal of Philip Egbert, etc.

"What is Miss Patricia to me?" he shrieked, looking about him for a missile. Though, as William remarked later, "What he thought he could hit me with, the Lord only knows!"

"'Send Hammer to me as soon as he comes back,' he says (William's report). 'Why, it's like a nightmare—going to church in a dickey and a pair o' spectacles!' he says, or words to that effect. 'And if so be as Hammer does not come, there'll be no wedding in Egham to-day, bride or no bride!'

"That's what he kep' on sayin' to me, and me tryin' to edge in all the time, that there bein' no Miss Patricia, there couldn't be a wedding—no, not if he was wrapped in corsets from head to foot, like them ancestor fellers of his in their coats o' mail! But listen to a word—he just wouldn't, sir. Only kept cryin' for Hammer, and utterin' words, sir, that I never thought wot the old creatur had the grit, sir, to get his tongue round. He must ha' been a *woner* when he was young, sir, from what I heard!"

Thus it was at Egham Castle, so far as the master of the house was concerned, and as reported upon by William the faithful.

The McGhies were much more composed, especially the younger members of the family. For instance, the boys, though they regretted the Egham and Athabasca pheasants, thought Patricia "no end of a plucky girl."

"Good old Pat," said Gilbert. "Hoist the Union Jack, give three cheers, and let the music play! The number of flies on our Pat is infinitesimal!"

As for Baby Lant, she said nothing, only thought

over the things she would say to Marthe, otherwise Mrs. Willie Symington, on her return to Balmaghie. Mr. Patrick McGhie, J.P., offered to apologise for his daughter's behaviour to Mr. Boreham-Egham. But that gentleman sent the bereaved parent word that his daughter might go and drown herself, if only he would find Hammer and bring him into the room. Mr. McGhie gasped and shrank from a personal interview with a desolate family tree wrapped in a scarlet dressing gown with flannel continuations!

But when Lord Athabasca came, with Mr. Toby Lasalle, his best man, a mighty fisher of salmon and authentic millionaire, the possessor of an island about the size of Ireland, there were, what William the footman somewhat vulgarly referred to as "times."

"Times" there were. Lord Athabasca demanded to see Mr. P. E. Egham Boreham-Egham at once and immediately, and it was replied to him that such a thing was impossible. But even in the days when Athabasca had been no more than plain Mr. Hearne Mackenzie, C.E., it had been difficult to say him nay.

So now. William delivered his message and was calmly put to the side by the collar of his coat, as if he had been a troublesome child. Then there fell a knock upon the door of Mr. Philip Egbert, and so forth.

"Don't come in—don't come in, whoever you are! I forbid you!" screamed, squeaked, and twittered —all at one time—the bat-like voice of the master of Egham.

But my Lord Athabasca, accustomed throughout his life to direct methods, simply opened the door and walked in. There was a wild flurry of scarlet, arms gesticulating, bat-like voice piping, flannel-clad legs which transported a white and pink earwiggy-looking thing furiously in the direction of Lord Athabasca. It squalled in his ear for him to go out. It pushed against him with its antennæ, curious jointed structures akin to the arms of undressed dolls. But my Lord

Athabasca did not "get out." On the contrary, quite!

He said, instead, "Hey, stop that!"

And curiously enough the scarlet dressing gown was at peace. Its occupant had never been addressed in that manner before.

"Get your clothes on!" said this wonderful Canadian lord, so different from the musty inbred things that are grown at home. "Get your clothes on, man, and help us to find out what has happened. Your Controller Hammer, who has an affair with me to settle, has vanished and apparently has taken with him Miss Patricia. And hang it, sir, I demand to know what it all means? Have you brought me here to make a fool of me?"

The "relics of humanity" were understood to deny something, anything, everything. The "relics" had nothing to do with the bride, now a term of mockery. The "relics" demanded Hammer, who alone was responsible for all the trouble. It was impossible, quite impossible for the master of the house to get out of his scarlet dressing gown without the help of Hammer.

"We'll see about that!" said Lord Athabasca. "I'll teach you or any man in this old overcrowded kingdom to make a fool of me! Here, Toby, Hearne, come up, I want you!"

And in answer to his summons, there appeared at the door of Mr. Philip Egbert's dressing room a round-faced, muscular man with twinkling eyes, and a tall, solemn, dark, younger man, who only needed a feather head-dress and some strings of wampum to be acknowledged a chief of the Northern Sioux.

"Put his clothes on!" said my lord, the ex-civil engineer.

Mr. Boreham-Egham squalled again for assistance. But as William and the other footmen were strewn along the path by which the salmon fisher and the

grandson of Chief Crowfoot had come, they felt that the apparelling of his master was Hammer's place and duty, and so kept at a discreet distance.

They dressed him, these two. They found his wig on a shelf and put it on wrong side foremost. They laced his corsets up the front. They bandaged his legs as if he had had a mustang accident. The scarlet dressing gown flew to one corner of the room. The flannel trousers—where went they? "Ask of the winds, which far and near, with fragments strewed the sea." Or, at least, ask of Toby, the salmon fisher of the Restigouche, and of Hearne, the serious assistant superintendent of the reformatory, not far away over the flat surface of Maw Moss. Meanwhile Lord Athabasca walked round the patient and offered suggestions. Toby and Hearne thoroughly enjoyed their task, however. And Hearne, in especial, brought to bear miracles of conscientiousness upon the pads and straps—so much so that Mr. Boreham-Egham felt as if he were being pinioned for instant execution.

"Now, I think he'll do," said Lord Athabasca. "Looks rather like——" a scarecrow he was going to say, when he remembered that he was in that scarecrow's house and under contract to pay £10,000 to that scarecrow's confidential man. A suspicion, perfectly unwarranted, that Hammer was to share the proceeds with his master, acted as a spur to the by no means easy temper of my Lord Athabasca.

"Fetch him downstairs," said my lord. "We will go into this in the drawing-room—before everybody."

And there in the drawing-room in the presence of all the company assembled, the wedding guests —such nearest neighbours as were acknowledged by the haughty, tree-toppy Egham Boreham-Eghams —Athabasca conducted his inquisition. On one side of him stood his son—dark, impassive, strikingly handsome; on the other, rotund, smiling, with a

face polished with good cheer, was Toby Lasalle, the salmon fisher, the greatest in the world, they said.

And so mighty is the power of the stronger will, so complete its domination, that Marigh herself—Marigh who had always been looked on as the backbone of the Hammer Combine—gave way and wept aloud.

Yes, it was true. Miss Patricia had never wished to marry his lordship. More than once she had declared her determination not to do so. Especially of late. There was—yes, she was sure—*some one else!* How could she know that? Well, Miss Patricia had been seen walking on the moor with some one by her side, of a figure like that of a young man. And it had been noticed that when she entered late from these unchecked rambles, she was sometimes flushed, sometimes sad, sometimes excited, and on one occasion in actual tears!

It was out at last, and everybody looked at Lord Athabasca to see how he would take it. He took it like the game old bird he was.

"Um-m-m-m-m," he said, rubbing his chin. "It would have saved a great deal of trouble if you had told me that before, Mrs. Hammer. Much as I admire Miss Patricia, I have not the slightest desire to marry a girl who does not want to marry me. She has good taste, no doubt. But all the same she has lost a good husband, eh, Toby?"

"That she has, dear old man," said the loyal Toby, "*and* a first-rate sportsman!"

"It was Algernon," said Marigh, still sobbing. "We was afraid to break it to you! His heart is that tender!"

"Ah!" said Lord Athabasca, in a lower tone, "his heart is tender, is it? And where may he have hidden away that tender heart of his to-day? Somewhere near the Bank of Scotland, I guess."

He looked at his watch, nodded, and then beckoned his son.

"Take one of the carriage horses," he said in a whisper; "they are fresh. I had them ordered here overnight for another purpose, which will not now be carried out. Go to the bank on the Mound and stop the cheque for ten thousand pounds which I gave in favour of Algernon Hammer, payable this day."

And he scribbled a few words on a card which he picked up from the table. The face of the dark young man — people whispered that it was his son, and that now at last there would be a reconciliation—cleared amazingly. He said not a word, but left the room with the card in his hand.

"Order the horses for us all at the same time," his father called after him. "The sooner we are out of this the better pleased we shall be, eh, Toby?"

And thus it was that the east-windy, speckless, frosty, along-Princes-Street-and-back-again, blue-blooded, all-there, banking young man in the head office, felled Algernon Hammer to the ground on his return from St. Margaret's, as surely as if he had taken out a loaded bludgeon to do it.

. . . . .

And it surprised no one very much that Marigh disappeared from Egham Castle that very afternoon, and that a body, identified as that of Algernon Hammer, was fished up by a trawler beyond the May.

CHAPTER XVI

SCHOOLMASTER GRAINER

THERE was a dark and deadly plot "on" at the "Hearne Mackenzie" Reformatory, that eminent establishment built by the munificence of a well-known millionaire, supported by voluntary contributions, and recently placed under Governmental supervision. Now, the "Hearne Mackenzie" boys were not model boys. Far from it. Before entering, each of its inmates had to have either three "petties" or one "grave" to his discredit. The "graves" —which meant magisterial sentence for a grave offence —were the aristocrats of the school, looked up to, toadied to, the models of the aspiring, as it were, the "glass of fashion and the mould of form."

Kid McGhie, officially known as No. 666, was of this latter sort—that is, till he fell from his high estate. As the Swanker had foretold, his father's fame had been his best introduction to the upper circles of "Hearne Mackenzie" society. It speaks well for the discipline, and the real human kindness with which the institution was carried on, that the boys who were of most use in the school, who stood out most strongly against the "St. Jacob's" influence, who looked forward to an honest way of earning a livelihood, were almost exclusively those who had been longest at the "Peat."

Of these the chief was Harry Lister, a red-headed lad of great strength, a good fighter with his fists, a clever workman in the "shops," and dowered with

good looks and a merry expression of eye, which carried him far.

It was not that he put his reformation on any moral basis—not, at least, in words. He did not vaunt his virtue, except as the best policy. He knew that in the "Hearne Mackenzie," anything else would simply be laughed at. Then there would be a fight. He did not want to fight—unless he had to. It was all very well for a "greenie" like McGhie's Kid, who had to show his mettle so as not to be "hazed," and whose recent successful encounter with Smutty (No. 391) was still in everybody's mouth. But red-headed Harry Lister was in no such case. For of him it might be said with reverence, that the rest of the acts of Harry Lister, and the songs that he sung, and how he licked the great bruiser, Groggy Bill, so that he could not stand up straight in boot leather, and how he warred with Grainer, giving back blow for blow, are they not written in the chronicles of the "Hearne Mackenzie"? Therefore, and for these reasons, had Harry Lister no need to strip and show his form to any within the walls of the "Peat."

But he was a lazy boy and oftentimes let the worser reason sway him to silence. About this time the "bad" element, which was led by Kissar Mills and Smutty, now received a tremendous addition in the shape of Duffus of the red tie, condemned to five years for "grave." It was the law of the school that none but the superintendent should know why a boy had been sent to the "Peat," but Duffus did not hide his light under a bushel. It was for house-breaking, violence, firing off a revolver at a policeman, and other mighty acts that Duffus the great had fallen from the senior wranglership of "Blind Jacob's" to be merely No. 680 at the "Hearne Mackenzie."

"He's a bad egg," said Harry Lister, after listening to the newcomer for some hours the first night. "There's only one sort worse than an industrial

schooler, an' that's a training-ship boy wot's got the chuck! Now, you mark my words, Beast, there'll be trouble in this old 'Peat' before we are many weeks older. Big trouble and blow the froth off the top! Don't you have nothing to say to the like o' him! Now, mind me, Beast, or I'll whop you for it!"

The Kid took the hint, and though Duffus of the red tie was at first astonishingly polite, and brought many messages from Daddy Lennox, Corn Beef Joe, and even from his stepfather, Knifer Jackson, the Kid did not unbend in the least.

"Your father bade me tell you that he must get you out—me, too. He can't work properly without one of us, and I am so much in request, having a headpiece, and eddication and that—he wants you out for the times and seasons when he can't have me—see, Kid?"

"Well, what is he going to do about it?" asked the Kid. "I'm in for four year and a half, and you for five. And then—why, it means Canada or the army. The cross game is up, you ask Harry Lister. He'll get his walking ticket in ten months. And then he clears for Canada with young Mr. Hearne."

At this simplicity Duffus laughed uproariously, so that the warder looked his way, and told him to shut that noise trap, or he would take the job off his hand.

"And do you suppose, Softie," demanded Duffus, in a lower and more cautious tone, "that a man like me—knowing what I know, and with ten fingers like these here ones—will stop to make boots or sit cross-legged on a greasy board in a place that fair stinks of ironing and new corduroy! Not much, my young friend! Oh, not considerable much!"

"And what do you intend to do, then?" said the Kid, in his most innocent manner.

But Duffus of the red tie laid his finger along the side of his nose.

"Ah!" he said, "that's tellin'! We must know whether you are staunch or not. After you are sworn in to be one of us, then you shall know, you and your precious chum, Harry Lister. If he means to milk cows in Canada all his life, it's more than I do! And I don't see what *you* are yarnin' about, anyway. When you get out o' this shop, they'll have to get your father's consent to send ye abroad, and you'll be too young to engage in the army. So, willy nilly, back you go to Mr. Knifer Jackson. There's nothing for it but to be solid with us, my young friend. And, indeed, right proud you may be of Knifer. There's not a cleaner workman between here an' Land's End —no, nor Johnny Groat's—barrin', that is, the education, where he is a bit rocky. You are in the way of gettin' some o' that here, such as it is. So don't throw away your chances, and the Knifer may make something o' ye yet! But stay here—*me*—Duffus —the cock o' 'Blind Jacob's'—oh, ha—ha—ha!"

And he went off in a paroxysm of somewhat subdued laughter.

Clearly, thought the Kid, there was mischief afloat. But what and where? And even if he found it out, what was he to do? Tell? That was impossible. He had not—he could not come to that yet.

Aloft in the cold, clear atmosphere of the office, otherwise the board room, Hearne Mackenzie, assistant superintendent, talked sadly with his chief.

"There's something in the wind," he said. "I feel it—how, I can't tell you, Carvel. Just the way I know by laying my cheek to the ground that there's a thunder-storm coming up. Indian blood, I dare say. Or so they would say in the Blackfoot country, or on the frontier of the North Sioux. Trouble coming fast down wind. I feel the thrill of it. And if I mistake not, it's that new boy."

"Not your favourite Kid? Not No. 666?" said Carvel. "Have the angels risen a second time in rebellion against the powers of heaven?"

"He is no angel, that young McGhie," said the assistant superintendent. "But it is not he who is making the trouble. If I am not mistaken, it's that gay young Duffus, who is so mighty spick and span!"

"Duffus—nonsense!" cried Carvel. "As pleasant spoken a young rascal as ever I saw, well dressed and hands like a lady. It was quite a pity to make him put on the institution rig. He would be a credit to the place as pony boy, if only he could drive!"

"Worst kind of all!" said Hearne Mackenzie. "When we get these smart Alecs on the Kootenay, we run them out sharp to the nearest railway station, and buy them a ticket to Uncle Sam's end of the line."

"And if they won't go?" said Carvel, smiling into his white beard.

Hearne Mackenzie cleared his throat and paused a moment.

"Oh, well," he said, "we never have any difficulty! You see, there's a lot of us. And we don't ask them to go. We *tell* them!"

"Uncle Sam always glad to see them?" inquired Carvel. "Seems to me I shouldn't like to run a reformatory for Kootenay derelicts—after what I've heard you tell about them."

"Oh, Uncle Sam—he's all right!" said Hearne Mackenzie. "They've either got to shin as fast as they can for a Tammany town and get into ward politics, or——"

He imitated the gesture of some one pulling on a rope.

"Ashes to ashes!" he said, not as a joke, but as a responsible man stating an undeniable fact in the most concise way possible.

"I fear," said Carvel, still smiling, "that after the Kootenay and your relative Crowfoot, you must find our methods here a little slow?"

"Yes," said Hearne Mackenzie, thoughtfully, "it is true, we can reform many a young fellow out on the Kootenay. But, you see, he must be a pretty decent young fellow to be let stay there at all. We catch them young there, chasten 'em a bit with good hard grub and good hard work, and then turn 'em loose, with this single commandment on their tables of stone—that they had better behave or they will find themselves swinging in the wind, like a tassel on a flag pole. As soon as a young fellow realises that that's right—*sure*—he takes no risks, but falls into step and becomes as decent as the next man!"

"Well, you're a rum fellow," said Carvel. "See here—I have been at this sort of work all my life—I believe in it. I'm ready to put my last shilling on it, just as you have done. But there's something about your way of looking at things which I don't fathom. I can snatch a cudgel and wade into a row with any man, but I believe you would be ready to see a gibbet set up in the back court to help us dispose of our failures!"

"It would save a lot of trouble, certainly," said the saturnine, quiet young man; "*also* it would be better for them—in the long run!"

"What a heathen idea!" said Carvel, who was optimistic.

"Maybe," said Hearne Mackenzie, "that's your point of view, and you are the boss here. But I have heard my grandfather, Crowfoot—he was a big chief and had a bigger head—say that if you couldn't make a man a good man, the next best thing was to make him a quiet man—a perman-ENT-ly quiet man! And I am not sure but what he was right. At least it saves trouble!"

Carvel rose. He smiled no more.

"Well," he said, "for a young man that has been recommended and pressed upon this institution, as peaceable and law-abiding, Christian and God-fearing, for a young man whom those who know no better

are pleased to consider—you will excuse the word—a trifle 'soft'—you are really something of a surprise, Hearne—yes, that's it, something of a surprise!"

He went out as he spoke, his mild yet keen eyes dwelling still on the motionless figure of the young man.

"But," he said, over his shoulder, "no disappointment!"

. . . . .

The after-guard of the "Peat" being thus to some extent on its defence, forearmed if not forewarned, Duffus of the red tie would have found some difficulty in carrying out his plan if it had not been for treachery on the quarter-deck. It seems impossible to believe that there could be any alliance between the warders and teachers of such an institution as the "Peat" Reformatory and the boys under their charge. And, indeed, in ordinary circumstances, this would have been incredible.

But just then the circumstances were far from ordinary at the "Peat." Grainer, the schoolmaster, was a soft, fair, sluggish-moving man with a shifty eye and a cruel mouth. During his hours of instruction there came from the schoolroom a continuous howl of suffering boyhood, punctuated with dull solid strokes of the cane. Hearne Mackenzie used to pace up and down the brick-yard, wondering if the directors would give him his leave if he were to go in just once and thrash Grainer within an inch of his life with his own canes, breaking them one after the other across his back. Even Carvel, whose principle was non-interference with his staff, kept away from the neighbourhood of the schoolroom at such times.

Now Grainer was—though the fact was naturally unknown in the school—the maternal uncle of Duffus of the red tie. Duffus was also, from the first

day, his best pupil. He had been well grounded, was clever at all the ordinary branches, and indeed, in arithmetic, mechanics, and the science of the pen was far in advance of his master.

Therefore Duffus was made monitor. The labours of Grainer, except with the cane, were mightily lightened thereby. Duffus taught most of the lower forms for him, and conducted, all unknown to his comrades, a good deal of quiet espionage in the school for the benefit of Grainer, who hated to think that there was a boy of any sort whom he could not flog. That was the kind of beast which, more particularly, Grainer was.

Of course if this spying could have been traced to Duffus, he would instantly and collectively have been slain. He would have got something in the dormitories which would have sent him to hospital for a month without malingering. But Duffus was far too clever to be caught out like that. His relationship to the schoolmaster of the " Peat " was unknown even to the superintendent. His information or misinformation was conveyed very much under the rose. Grainer found a list of rebels against regulations, written out in copperplate in his hat, in the pocket of his greatcoat, in the inside of his locked desk. He asked no questions, but acting at once upon the information, " whaled " unmercifully the just and the unjust, among others, of course, the Kid.

This afforded him some relief. For he was the sort of man who had instinctively chosen his profession in order that he might play the brutal tyrant over the bodies and souls of the helpless. He actually derived a keen and exquisite delight from the infliction of pain. There are such ; more, indeed, than any except the medico-legal specialist wots of.

Still Grainer was not happy. At least he was happy only when his thrashing arm was in action, and the sobs and wails of the victims rose on the stuffy schoolroom air. For Grainer was a disap-

pointed man, a man with a grievance, or rather, two grievances.

Superintendent Carvel was the one, Hearne Mackenzie the other. Grainer envied Carvel his place and salary, with the low, bitter, self-gnawing hatred of the mean-spirited peasant who has "bettered himself" a little, but not much. He hated Hearne Mackenzie because he was a lord's son, because he did not need to be there at all, drawing £120 a year of salary, and because he would have preferred Hearne's cottage to his own. It was at the other side of the road, away from the observance of Carvel, the hoary sneak who——And here Grainer diverged into paths of abuse along which we need not follow him.

At all events, Simeon Grainer, schoolmaster (late national schoolmaster, of England), hated, envied, and considered with all uncharitableness Superintendent Carvel, his assistant, Hearne Mackenzie, and all their works.

Simeon Grainer considered schemes by which he might supplant them and sit in their seats, thrashing boys and ruling men. He thought of the lovely canes he would buy at the expense of the institution. His fingers twitched to clutch them. He thought also how he would lie in bed till the time of morning exercise—that is, punishment—instead of going into the chilly schoolroom at eight, which was the present unholy rule.

Simeon Grainer, schoolmaster, saw his way to deal with his superintendent. That is, he thought he saw it. There is a joint in every man's harness, and Simeon Grainer believed he had found that of Superintendent Carvel's.

But, admittedly, in the nature of things, Hearne Mackenzie was a more difficult matter. At first the "staff" had fought shy of Hearne. Men working for their living did not understand a young man who, after giving thousands of pounds to an institu-

tion, was content to accept a salaried post like one of themselves. But by and by, as said old Aldebaran Newton, whose father had been a distinguished astronomer—and, when sober, knew Jupiter from Venus—"when we fand oot that he did his wark like the rest o' hus—indeed, raither better—and pit on nae side, and wad fry himsel' a chop or maybe just a fresh herrin' or twa to his coffee an' bap, we began to understand that, barrin' the bit crack in his brain pan, that hurt naebody, no even himsel', he was juist like the lave o' hus. Forbye, it was a kind o' honour to hae the son o' a real lord in the institution, even though he had a bit o' a crack in the skull o' him!"

But Schoolmaster Grainer could not so pass things over. To understand is to forgive, truly. All the eternal hopes of all the religions are founded on that. Other foundation can no man lay. But Schoolmaster Grainer did not understand. He could not. His mind was so constructed that he could not believe but that Hearne Mackenzie—that tall, sober, sombre, dusky-skinned young man, with the millionaire for a father—had some sinister motive in coming to the "Peat" Reformatory as assistant superintendent.

He did not specially want the post for himself. But he wanted Hearne "out of that." He coveted his house, until in the fulness of time, he should spring his plot against Carvel, unseat that great man, and reign in his stead.

First, then, Hearne Mackenzie! It seemed a forlorn hope for Grainer—to those, that is, who did not know the miracles of low cunning that seeded and mushroomed morn and eve in the brain of Simeon Grainer. During the day he was too much employed taking the hide off a couple of hundred boys to have time for anything but the delicious enjoyment which this exercise afforded him.

But at morn and eve, as has been said, he was free. Then would the creature walk out alone, with his

waistcoat curving before him—he lived well—and his hands resting from honest toil under the tail of his seedy Oxford coat.

He told you it was a fine night if you met him. But that, or any other civility he might offer, never moved anything sympathetic in your bosom. You only wanted all the more to kick him. As for Hearne Mackenzie, he had to sink his nails into his palms and turn abruptly on his heel in the opposite direction to keep from doing it, thinking of the sort of music he had heard from that man's schoolroom only an hour before.

"Oh," he would groan, "if 'the boys' could only have him for one afternoon, just one happy Sunday afternoon when there wasn't much doing, down in the old camp on the Kootenay, I wouldn't ask for more nor better in this life!"

As Hearne was a good fellow, and the comrades in the "old camp on the Kootenay" were also good fellows, it is to be presumed that they wished to have a little quiet Sunday school, with Simeon Grainer for a first pupil. And there is no doubt but that he would have learned a lesson from Hearne Mackenzie and the "boys" down on the old Kootenay which would have done him good for all his life.

But alas for Simeon and for his chances of future instruction, the Kootenay was far away, the camp fires dead, "the boys" scattered to the four winds, or, more likely, eaten alive by the big gray-and-black "skeeters" which abound there.

In one of his evening walks Simeon, for once in luck's way—at least so he thought—kicked up a piece of white paper which had been trodden into the black ooze of a crumbly peat brow.

Simeon held it up. There was the print of a small foot thereon—rather, of a dainty heel.

"Somebody angry!" murmured Simeon, seeing that the heel had gone right through the letter at one side.

"Writing upon it!" said Simeon, holding the half-sheet up in the waning grayish-yellow light of the gloaming. He struck a match, which flamed up so suddenly that if the piece of paper had not been damp with the dew of the moorland, it might then and there have been lost to the world.

"Hum," said Simeon, scratching his cheek with the hand that had held the match, "I should know that writing. I will show it to Duffus. He will know! Smart boy, Duffus!"

So to Monitor Duffus, late of the red tie, just as the twilight melted into dark, and the windows of the "Peat" flamed like those of a factory, the letter, unsigned and apparently unfinished, was committed for inspection. The last class of evening school had been dismissed. Fewer boys had been flogged than usual. Grainer had something on his mind, something that took the edge off the delight of conjoining a new and weakly boy and an old but healthy cane. He wanted to be left alone with Duffus, nominally to set copies, really to set traps.

"Sub supe!" said Duffus, curtly, holding his little cock-sparrow head to the side to look. "He wrote that—no other!"

"Could you imitate it—add another sentence or two?" queried Simeon, regarding with interest a chart of the rivers of Patagonia, hung on the wall to illustrate—very appropriately—the theory of watersheds—the eyes of Mr. Simeon Grainer's pupils doing the practical water-shedding.

Duffus looked at the schoolmaster more cock-sparrowly than ever. He had a secret contempt for the cruel, cunning, sluggish creature who could do nothing with his pulpy hands except thrash. But for the present he was in his power, the power of Grainer's cane, and he nodded, smilingly. One day, he said to himself, he would get the Knifer or Corn Beef Joe to give the schoolmaster a "doing." Then he would learn something. Probably something

closely approximating to Hearne's Sunday school lesson on the banks of the Kootenay.

In the meantime Duffus of the red tie—removed for cause—glanced at Simeon Grainer and calculated his own advantage.

"Supposin'," he said, slowly and softly, with the cock-sparrow glint of keenest watching in his eye, "supposin' that I can do as ye say, will you agree to forget your master-key some night where I can get at it? I will put it back again before morning!"

"What for?" said the master, suspiciously. "To skip out over the heather, I suppose. You're a clever boy, Duffus, but I thought you were a sight too clever for that! Why, we have everything arranged, and you would be nabbed before you could get a mile!"

Duffus sneered visibly. "These others might," he said. "Listen to them quacking over their lessons like so many ducks in a pond. But not me, Duffus, that has had education and advantages! Well, master, you forget that key, and I'll write what you want. The ink's the only difficulty——"

"Oh, I can borrow some of Mr. Hearne's—tell him a lie! That's easy!" said the schoolmaster.

Duffus regarded him approvingly. "You're in the wrong profession," he said, smiling impudently; "but when you come to 'Blind Jacob's,' where I'm a professor, I'll give you a tip or two that will send you skyting to the top o' the tree!"

"Duffus," said Simeon Grainer, "sometimes I don't quite know whether to give you a feed and a glass o' beer, or manhandle you with my best new cane!"

"I would try the feed and drink," said the boy, smartly. "The cane wouldn't make me write like Mr. Hearne. Rather a good hand that!" he added, regarding it critically. "I think it could be imitated best on gin an' water!"

"You were born to be hanged, certainly!" said the schoolmaster.

"And *you* would be as safe in the middle of the Atlantic, with a life-preserver and a meat biscuit, as in your own bed at home!" retorted Duffus of the red tie, who would give the schoolmaster nine points out of ten at that sort of thing and come out ahead every time.

With the aid of a couple of glasses of gin and water, a bottle of ink borrowed from Mr. Hearne's room, and many shiftings of the paraffin lamp, so that the light might fall on the writing at different angles, the additions to the letter found on the moor were successfully achieved.

The schoolmaster gazed at the boy in wonderment. This was far beyond him.

"You are a son of perdition," he said to Duffus; "but I wish I could do that!"

"Ah!" remarked Duffus, his hand still waving his pen gracefully, as if in search of other worlds to conquer. "Find it useful, eh? On cheques and things?"

"Testimonials!" said the schoolmaster, enthusiastically. "Why, with a power of handwriting like that you could show testimonials from the highest in the land, and they wouldn't ever know the difference themselves!"

"They never do," said Duffus. "It has been tried. A man is doing seven years for it now. Nothing to do with me, of course—being only a boy!"

"What!" cried the schoolmaster, who remembered the case. "Did you do it?"

"That's tellin'!" said Duffus, winking an eye. "Impossible! Only a boy! Led away! First offence! Send him to a reformatory, where ky-ind, good people, like Mr. Schoolmaster Grainer——"

"Drop it, that's enough!" spurted Mr. Grainer, sharply. "I can half kill you, mind!"

"But then the testimonials?" suggested the boy, with subtle irony. "There's a power of great

people in the world that would like to say over their signature what a fine man you was, Mr. Grainer!"

"But how?" said Mr. Grainer, slow at anything except thrashing and his own style of plotting. "You haven't got any great folks' handwritings to copy."

"There's a paper wot's called, I think, *The Best of All Bests* or something like that—all the Bigwigs in Bigwigtown all talking Bigwig together—or writing it rather. It's an A1 thing. Now, in their yearly album you can choose who you will have, and tell me what to make 'em say—bishops, political Johnnies, Mr. Gladstone, the Claimant, Mr. Company Promoter Dooley, and General Booth. They say what their favourite hymn is, on which arm they have been vaccinated, if their souls aspire, and if they are subject to bleeding at the nose. Then they all end up by saying what a fine paper *The Best of the Best* is, and how they are, one and all, the obedient servants of the man wot put up the job! Oh, the *Best o' the Best's* album is no end useful, and costs only a silver sixpence! Good practice for me, too, and will teach you, sir, the art of superior composition!"

"If it were not that there is really something in what you say, Duffus, and I may, in fact, need such a thing one of these days, I would be compelled to take the hide off you for impudence!"

"Your very good health, sir," said the cock-sparrow, squinting suggestively with one eye at his empty glass; "but pray remember that I'm here for five years and won't stop a month! It's now or never for those testimonials."

The schoolmaster meditated deeply. "Well," he said, "I will get the book. I think I have seen it on the book-stalls at railway stations, or at least something like it. But there's something to come before that. Now be off to your bed, Duffus. Your mind travels too fast. I must think things out. My motto is 'slow but sure'!"

"You won't forget about the master-key, sir," said Duffus. "According to agreement, sir! On the peg under the hatstand in the lobby of your house. I can come in for it whenever I like!"

"You are almost too universally talented a young man, Master Duffus, even for me!" cried Schoolmaster Simeon, looking after the boy as he crossed the court to No. 3 dormitory.

CHAPTER XVII

PLOT THE FIRST

THE " Peat " Reformatory was at this time the centre of three several plots—two of them having Mr. Schoolmaster Simeon Grainer for their storm centre ; the other was hatched by Duffus of the red tie. Of these, one was deceitful, another dangerous, and the third desperate. The desperate plot, as might be expected, emanated from the accomplice of the Knifer and Corn Beef Joe. As these three conspiracies involved, more or less, most of the persons mentioned in this history, we will take them in their order.

The schoolmaster locked his door behind him. His house had been " done out " for the day by Mrs. Isaac Brotherton, the wife of one of the senior warders. He had asked the assistant superintendent to take his classes for the evening, a thing which Hearne was always glad to do, out of pity for the boys' hides. Mr. Simeon was going on a message of his own to the great house of Three Ridings down in the valley, the Scottish home of Lord Athabasca.

He had a letter with him, a letter with the print of a haughty little heel upon it, where it had been angrily crushed into the peat soil.

But to that letter there were new additions—written with the pen and ink of Mr. Hearne Mackenzie, and apparently by his hand. These additions were such that—so the cunning schoolmaster thought—Mr. Hearne Mackenzie might think it wise to remain in Canada after his next journey, instead of returning

to the little red brick house across the road, so highly coveted by Simeon Grainer.

There was, it seemed to Mr. Simeon, no special danger to himself in what he was about to do. He had found a weapon, sharpened it, and it would have been foolish if he had not been willing to make the best use of it. He therefore enclosed the (amended) note he had found on the moor in an envelope, sealed it with the strongly marked St. George and the Dragon one finds on the reverse of a sovereign—an excellent imitation of a coat of arms—and finally addressed it to the Right Hon. Lord Athabasca, G.C.M.G., etc., Three Ridings, Lothianshire.

Having arrived in the valley, he went hastily up the front steps of the great building in the dusk, drawing his hat brim well down and standing his coat collar well up, he rang the bell, and handed in the letter to the solemn man in black who opened the door.

"From Egham Castle. No answer!" he said, and was making off.

The Three Ridings' footman stood uncertainly with the note in his hand. Hospitality was traditional at Three Ridings.

"Hi—won't you come round to the hall and take a drop o' something?" he called out.

"No, I thank you!" said the schoolmaster, over his shoulder.

Something unprofessional in the tone and manner of the messenger from Egham Castle retained the attention of the first footman at Three Ridings.

"Just as well, perhaps," he muttered, shutting the door, "or Jenkins might 'a' needed to count the spoons after *you* had gone. My, they do keep some rum old fossils over at that Egham—regglar Noah's Ark, it is, I'm told!"

But he took the letter up to Lord Athabasca all the same. The peer was bending with knit brows over a half-cut copy of a book on the Dominion of

Canada dedicated to himself. He had sharpened a blue pencil to mark the passages from which he dissented. And so far as he had gone, he seemed to have dissented from everything. The blue pencil had followed the lines of type, ploughing along angrily here, there often piercing two or three pages right through at one fell swoop. At another, it had conscientiously deleted an adjective here, corrected a census return there. Then suddenly aroused, it had splurted a furious scrawl— "Nonsense!" on the margin. Lastly, the book, dedication and all, was on the point of being pitched across the room, in the general direction of the waste-paper basket. The pencil had been bitten till the taste of the blue (a coal-tar product) warned the reader that his mouth must look as if he had just been having a feed of ripe blackberries.

"Your lordship, a letter."

"Where from?" demanded Lord Athabasca. "Any answer?"

"From Egham Castle, my lord," said the soft voice of the footman. "The man said that he would not wait. There is no answer."

"So much the better," growled my lord. "What can they be wanting with me? Why, that's Hearne's handwriting, or I'm a Dutchman! What filthy paper, though! What's this—what's this?"

He went grumbling across to the large moderator lamp to see better, and stood glowering and wrinkling his brow.

"Miss Patricia" (he read), "I have no right to address you, considering the position in which circumstances have placed us." (I should think he had not, the dog!) "But in a moment of weakness I have told you my heart. I hold to that. I cannot go back. I love you, and I shall never love another. In the future which is before both of us, in spite of all that you can do, I shall be ever as now, your friend and lover. My father cannot last long. I am heir to

all he possesses. You might do worse than go off for a while to the snug hiding place we two know of till the storm blows over. Then you may have the money, the peerage, and your sweetheart as well. Yours till death."

There was no signature, but evidently the letter needed none.

Lord Athabasca read the letter over thrice carefully. As he read, the colour left his cheeks and he bit hard again on the aniline pencil.

"So," he said, "this was the reason he came so willingly and comfortably to the marriage. To-morrow I shall settle Mr. Hearne. He thought, doubtless, that by marrying a second time I would do him out of part of my money—settlements on my wife, possibilities—and so on. The easiest way, in the opinion of my handsome son, was to make love to the girl—my girl! Well, to-morrow I will go over to the 'Hearne Mackenzie' Reformatory—and—reform the assistant superintendent! It is a blessing that I am chairman of the directors—with provisional powers. If I cannot dismiss, I can suspend. And if Mr. Hearne does not set out at once for the Kootenay, I am not such an old man yet, but I will let daylight through him where he stands, if he were my son three times over!"

Then the lusty old Nor'wester thrust the joint production of his son and Master Duffus of the red tie into his pocket, and went calmly down to dinner, where he was the gayest of the large bachelor company which sat about a round of ancient mahogany.

"One might take him for fifty," said Sir Peter Salt, one of his guests, "but when I was governor of Cape Breton, in '67, he was just as lusty an old cock-bird as he is to-day. And after that he had an Indian wife, too, with eyes like pansies. My word—the kind with no yellow in them—and a voice—on my soul, if she had had a sister and if I had been

sure that old Crowfoot, her father, would not have cut my throat, I declare I might have married a squaw myself!"

"And you might have done worse!" said Toby Lasalle, who sat next him, swapping salmon stories. He knew the Indian country, so they said.

"I have!" said the ex-governor of Cape Breton, with a sigh, as he thought of his stern spouse sitting at home waiting for him, "nursing her wrath to keep it warm."

"To-morrow I will settle that young man," said Lord Athabasca to himself, "once and for all!"

He went up to the "Peat" Reformatory in the forenoon, put up his pair of grays at the little Kingside Inn a mile to the southward, and strolled down to call upon his son, his soft, fawn-coloured felt on the side of his head, and a smile on his lips—for everybody except his only son.

He found Hearne busily superintending a gang of boys planting potatoes. The rich black soil, never broken before, gave—for a year or two, at least—magnificent crops of these, in what are termed locally "lazy beds." They were not so good nor so plentiful the second year, but then there was not the least difficulty in changing the *venue*. You had all Maw Moss before you as far as the eye could reach, even to the very park walls of Egham.

The young man took off his hat at sight of his father, for in spite of each going his own way, there was something patriarchal in their relations.

"I am glad to see you, sir," he said, striding across the lumpy, irregular acres of the moorland, surefooted and silent as one of his cousins of the Northern Sioux. His father did not hold out his hand, but Hearne, accustomed to the moods of his bluff parent, thought nothing of that. Lord Athabasca came near, apparently deeply interested in a document which he had selected out of his pocket-book. He stumbled over a little mound of peats, left on the still half-frozen

ground from last year, and but for the quick restraining hand of his son he would have gone headlong into one of the "slunks" or deep excavations three parts filled with black coomby water, from which in times past the compressed peat had been dug in its raw state.

Lord Athabasca shook his sleeve angrily free from his son's fingers, and reaching out the letter to Hearne, he said abruptly, "Did you write that?"

Hearne saw only the first part. He knew the paper. He was not a man to disown his handiwork in any circumstances.

"I did," he said, instantly, "but"—he hesitated a moment as if to put what he was going to say with some care—"I do not see what my letter is doing open in your hands!"

"It concerns me, sir!" said Athabasca, looking at him very straight. A stare which Hearne as straightly returned. "It concerns me deeply. You used your position here—your nearness to Egham Castle—to make love to Miss Patricia, when you knew that she was already my intended wife—when you knew that all the preparations had been made on either side for the wedding. That is true, is it not?"

The dark face of the tall grandson of Crowfoot had by this time lost its flush—in which was something almost metallic, like copper 'glance' from the mine with the sun on it.

"It *is* true!" he said, simply.

"Then why, sir," said his father, "did you venture to remind her that I was an old man, and that, if she would wait in the secure retreat which you had provided for her, in a little while she might have all—peer, money, and a young lover as well?"

"I do not know to what you refer!" said the young man, a little dazed. "I never thought or said any of these things."

"Do not lie!" cried his father, threateningly. "I have a great mind to shoot you where you stand for a treacherous hound! It is only the thought of your mother which stops me."

The young man drew his head up haughtily, so stilly and haughtily indeed, that the letter which his father was reaching out for him to see dropped on the hard black peat and remained there unnoticed by either.

"Hearne Mackenzie, the son of Hearne Mackenzie, and grandson of Crowfoot does not tell lies," he said, simply.

"It is enough," said Lord Athabasca. "I have heard quite enough. You have robbed me of the one thing that gave me a chance to make the years of my old age worth living. You may know, or you may not, where she has hidden herself——"

"I do *not* know!" said Hearne directly, but not raising his voice.

"No matter," said his father, "she fled from me because of you."

"She would not listen to me, I tell you," said the young man. "It is true I told her that I loved her. I do love her. I cannot help it. But she threw my letter from her and trampled it in the moss. I suppose that is how I come to see my handwriting addressed to a lady in your hands?"

Lord Athabasca shook his head and smiled bitterly.

"You will not succeed in making me angry," he said; "I am resolved. You are no son of mine from this moment. You have ruined and spoiled me. If this girl had not seen you, listened to you, undoubtedly she would have married me. You have counted on my death, on my money, on my position. She will wait for you, doubtless. Very well, she can. But first of all I shall take care that you lose your position here. I give you twenty-four hours to get away without the disgrace of dismissal. You can go back to the Kootenay, and you will find your old

logging camp ready for you. The boss will take you on at the old wages. You are, I believe, a good man with the axe!"

"And suppose I do not?" said the young man, turning an emotionless and Roman face on his father. "Suppose I decide to stay?"

"Then," said Lord Athabasca, "I will have you arrested for uttering menaces—for threatening to kill your own father. You have done enough—you had better go back to the Kootenay than face that!"

"I have done enough—yes!" said Hearne Mackenzie. "I will resign, sir!" And saluting his father gravely, he turned toward the gang of boys who were still busy at the potato-planting in the "lazy beds." They had been watching the interview with quick, sidelong glances, but not even the Swanker had noticed anything out of the way.

"They seemed glad to see each other," commented that young gentleman, "and the old bird—he tipped Mr. Hearne a piece o' paper—I shouldn't wonder if it was a five poun' note!"

Hearne Mackenzie saw out the end of his working day, and then, all the potatoes being set in their proper places and relations, the "lazy beds" all covered up, he conducted his gang home and went to break the news to Carvel.

"Do nothing of the sort," said the superintendent; "stay where you are. I have as much influence with the directors as he has, though he *is* chairman. Besides it was your money—most of it——"

"Don't let us go into that," said Hearne Mackenzie, hastily for once; "I have passed my word to my father! I must go!"

So the first part of Schoolmaster Simeon's combinations had come off all right. He laughed that night when he heard that Mr. Hearne was to go back to Canada without any of the boys accompanying him.

"I bet a sov.," he said to old Isaac Brotherton,

" that this is the last the 'Peat' will see of him. More than that, I'll be in his cottage in six months!"

Old Isaac merely remarked that he would not take him up. He was no vain wagerer, whose gold passeth away "as the morning cloud, and as the early dew."

Mr. Hearne Mackenzie left the reformatory which bore his name in the latter days of a keen, dry-blowing March, when the stinging showers from the east made a man look at his coat before he could tell whether he had had to do with snow, sleet, or only plain ice-water expressed from some celestial hose-pipe at very high pressure indeed.

By the advice of Carvel, he took up his abode at the comfortable little inn at Kingside, an old coaching "stance," and now again with the rush of cyclists becoming a "kenned place" for the quality of its ham and eggs and the affability of its landlady, Mistress McWhan, whose family of pretty daughters departed promptly one by one, as they grew up, in company with one or other of the aforesaid cyclists, bound to them by the memory of many ham-and-egg teas, and looking very often at a plain gold ring on the fourth finger of the left hand.

Hearne arrived at the Kingside Inn after the departure of most of these pretty daughters, when the remnant, two in number, were "veesitin' their married sisters," it being the dead time of the year at Kingside. So Mrs. McWhan, all sympathy and personal attention, waited herself on the grave, polite young man with the dusky skin, whose father was believed, on the word of Mr. Carvel, superintendent of the "Peat," to have behaved so shamefully to him.

During the days which followed, Hearne tried his best to search out Patricia. He even went and interviewed her father, but found himself, as the cause of the terrible *fiasco* of the heiress-ship, driven from the door of Balmaghie by that indignant justice of the peace.

He succeeded better with Baby Lant, who, at sight of his clean-cut, clean-shaven face, and the aristocratic hook of his Roman nose—the direct legacy of the late Crowfoot, great war chief—instantly dismissed a certain Freddy Blaine, a young and callow squire of the neighbourhood, who was making desperate love to her, and threatening to split his riding breeches —extra well fitting—by bending fervently and impressively forward to tell her how the colour of her eyes affected him.

"Go away," she said; "I've heard all that before —hundreds of times!"

Then she went out walking.

She met Hearne at the turn of the road, where, in the times that were past, Patricia had dragooned Marthe and Willie. Baby Lant needed no such encouragements or excuses. With but one daughter left at home, her parents were more "amenable," as Mrs. P. Brydson McGhie had once said—ah, how erroneously of Patricia.

All the same—well, all the same—it was lonely for Baby Lant at Balmaghie these days, with Marthe caring only about Willie's sermons and white-seam sewing of a mysterious and delicate kind.

And Pat—well, Pat—"Over the hills and far away!" That was all that could be said of Pat.

Baby Lant bent her great, wondering blue eyes —real blue, as blue as the sky, for instance—on the young man's face. Yes, he was handsome, distinguished—but oh, how grave! Baby Lant began to think she liked grave men. Baby Lant made up a complete romance, in which she made love to herself in a fashion perfectly irresistible. She wrote herself the most charming love letters. She proposed for herself. After delightful tos-and-fros, she was accepted, and on the eve of marriage—all to the aforesaid grave young man—when with his hat off he explained, in answer to her question, his purposes on her father's lands and policies.

"To find Patricia—oh!" she said, her eyes becoming full of the most thrilling interest—nine times more beautiful and fuller of emotion than when she had only looked upon him as a possible additional lover of her own, "are you—Lord Athabasca's son?"

The young man nodded, and a vivid flush rose to either cheek bone, remaining there as if it had been touched by the grand-paternal war paint.

"Did—Miss Patricia—your sister—speak to you of me, by any chance?" he faltered.

"*Pat tell me?*" said Baby Lant, with a glance out of her big, blue, liquid eyes that would have "knocked Freddy Blaine silly" if he had encountered the like. "Pat tell me?" she repeated severely. "Well, young man, I don't quite see what *you* have to do with that!"

"Do you know where she is?" said Hearne Mackenzie, abandoning his first position.

"That also comes under the category of things which are not the business of wandering young men," said Baby Lant, saucily.

"But it is of tremendous importance to me," said Hearne, bending his black, long-lashed eyes squarely on the liquid blue ones.

"I daresay," said Baby Lant, "but it needn't bring you all this way up the avenue. We shall have a bulletin board fixed at the corner. Then Pat's friends can read the latest dispatches from the seat of war, and go their way without putting father in a temper! Now he won't be bearable all evening—perhaps not for a week! I suppose you have been up at him, and he has growled at you like a bear with a sore head?"

"He did request me to leave his property as soon as might be!" said Hearne Mackenzie, as gravely and quietly as ever.

"Ah," sighed Baby Lant, "it's a pity you did not fall in love with me instead of Pat! Then you would

have had no bother—except from me, that is. My father just aches to get me off his hands! And sometimes he is such a cross-patch that I just ache for somebody to take me. You understand me?"

Some young men would *not* have understood, and presumed—to their destruction. But Hearne Mackenzie was not of this kind.

He came from a land where a fair woman is a scarce article, her favours of exceeding price, and where a revolver bullet at short range pays in full for any little misunderstanding. So Hearne Mackenzie only remarked gravely that it was a pity.

The pout of Baby Lant's mouth was something to remember in dreams. But she was not angry. Far—very far, indeed, from it.

"You love Pat?" she queried, standing indomitably before him.

"*I do!*" Hearne answered, as simply as if in a church. He saw no reason why he should be ashamed of a fact which was a fact and could not be changed.

Baby Lant put out her hand with a rather mannish gesture, picked up from her Brother Gilbert, though, indeed, there was nothing else mannish about her.

"Shake!" she said. This also had been acquired from Gilbert.

And Hearne Mackenzie, with a first beam of gladness in those deep eyes, in which joy and pain made such slight showing, put his hand silently into Baby Lant's.

"I would kiss you just to cement the relationship—for Pat's sake, that is," she said, "but I have a feeling that Freddy Blaine—I sent him off just before you came—is skulking somewhere along the carriage drive that goes up to the stables. And I don't want to compromise YOU! But all the same, as Pat herself used to say to Marthe and Willie, 'Bless you, my children'!"

"And her address?" said Hearne, quietly.

"Oh, you men!" cried Baby Lant, laughing. "When you are *not* in love, no butterfly so uncertain, no dragonfly so jumpy-off-at-an-angle. But once you are in love—realsome, that is, not like silly Freddy watching through the bushes yonder—you 'keep in the middle of the road,' and avalanches and earthquakes are quite unable to turn you. *Why, even I can't do it myself!*

"'Patricia's address?' We don't know it—that's flat. Moreover, it's perfectly true, but if you don't tell anybody, I do know that she's all safe. She's learning nursing, or doing something extra angelic—fagging after poor people, as all girls do when they can't get the man they want just when they want him, and start their own little happiness factory with man attachment, nursery annexes, kitchen, scullery, *and* garden plot, all complete and self-contained. Of course I mean to do the same when my time comes. You needn't look at me like that, Mr. Hearne Mackenzie! It won't be you that will drive me to it. For you are Pat's property, and there's honour among—well, among all nice girls," concluded Baby Lant, somewhat lamely.

"However," she went on, "now I am studying up the rapt, self-sacrificing expression, so as to be all ready to do the virgin martyr. But *I'm* going to have a nursing home, and take only interesting cases—slightly wounded young officers home from the war, clergyman's sore throats (curates only), authors under forty (no poets need apply), and respectable young men of good appearance who have been in the Nor'west Mounted Police—and have been injured permanently by having so little to do!"

Hearne Mackenzie opened his mouth as if to ask her how a girl could know all that. But he thought better of it. It appeared that there were not many things which innocent, blue-eyed Baby Lant

did not know, except the one thing that interested him—her elder sister's address!

"But," said Baby Lant, "though your appreciation of my charms cannot be said to be overwhelming, I will take pity on you. Leave me your address, and I will send you such news of Pat as reaches me. I will filter the yield for your behoof. You shall have the electric-separator first-quality gold, the cyanide-process bars—and I will keep only the strictly feminine by-products for myself—the things which it is good for no man to know. If he does, he dies young and unregretted—in the neighbourhood of Morningside or Colney Hatch. And then everyone thinks it was in the family, when really all that was the matter with him was just *that he knew too much!* From this will I save you, Mr. Hearne Mackenzie. In the meantime take this information on the most authoritative official declaration 'communicated to the press.' My sister Patricia McGhie (late Egham Boreham-Egham) is well and healthy, especially at the hours of eight, one, and seven—when she takes her meals. But as she shows a quite new and marvellous disposition to become a district nurse, unprejudiced persons like myself, who remember the old Pat, are of the opinion that there is a man in the question. Good evening, Mr. Hearne Mackenzie; think this well over before you decide to emigrate. 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings,' you know. And speaking of sucklings, reminds me—you can send me a box of candies. Mine are 'out.' And I think I deserve them, wasting my time on Pat's young men like this, with Freddy watching over in the covers yonder, as sulky as a badger!"

And there is little doubt that, all things considered, Baby Lant was well deserving of the beautiful box of candied fruits which, with one of his few remaining sovereigns, Mr. Hearne Mackenzie bought for her.

And the last thing he heard as he went down the avenue was the clear silver of Baby Lant's tones

calling, "Freddy—Freddy! come out and take me for a ride! You needn't sulk! I know you are there! Come, I want you!"

A heart singularly whole and intact had Miss Atalanta, youngest and only resident daughter of Mr. P. Brydson McGhie, J.P., of Balmaghie, in the free province of Galloway and Stewartry of Kirkcudbright.

CHAPTER XVIII

PLOT THE SECOND

Mr. Schoolmaster Simeon Grainer rubbed his hands. His first, the plot deceitful, had worked to a marvel. The second, that against Carvel, the superintendent, was more dangerous, but also, as it seemed to him, more certain of success.

"It is simply impossible that Carvel can have made all that money honestly," he said, as he referred to some figures transcribed into a little pocket-book of his own. "Why, it's more than the whole amount of his salary ever since he came to the institution! I have him sure—especially now when young Mr. Hearne is done for!"

Now, what Grainer, the soft-handed, cruel-mouthed schoolmaster had in his mind was very simple. The "Peat" Reformatory having been erected by private subscription, largely with the moneys of Lord Athabasca and his son, there was naturally a considerable amount of patriarchal simplicity in its management.

Carvel, the superintendent, a man of known probity, received everything—subscriptions, donations, government grants, earnings of the different shops. He also paid out everything—the monthly accounts of the furnishers and providers of victual, wages, gratuities, taxes, running expenses. Four times a year Lord Athabasca, who loved anything that had to do with figures or scented of strict business, would drive over from Three Ridings, and audit the books and vouchers himself. There he would labour all a winter's day,

tasting nothing more than a glass of water and a biscuit, Carvel seated on a chair near him, ready to explain anything which turned up.

It came about, therefore, that Carvel had generally to pay his own salary. And so, on one occasion, being a trusting man, not given to thinking evil, nor to suspecting it in others, he had handed his bank pass book over to Mr. Schoolmaster Grainer, who had asked permission to go to the town for the afternoon, with the request that he would pay in the £50 which constituted the quarterly salary of the superintendent.

"I have him," said the amiable Simeon, as soon as he had managed to get a quiet half hour with the figures which were contained in the slim, little blue book. "Carvel has brought up a large family while superintendent of the 'Peat' without touching a single penny of his screw!"

And in the night which supervened, before he could give it back to Carvel, he had made a copy of the whole book. Therefore, he had only to put his statement before the directors, and, as bankers' records are practically indestructible, Carvel's own bank must perforce bear out the correctness of his figures.

"It's a clean cop!" he said over and over to himself—partly because he believed it and partly to give himself courage. It needed some courage, for if the superintendent were not dismissed—he, Simeon Grainer, would most certainly be. This accusation he could not make, like the last, anonymously; he must come out of his rat hole and attack his chief in the open. Simeon liked this little enough, but he possessed that curious sort of desperate courage which belongs to the flea and other backbiting vermin. He would attack something ten times greater than himself, trusting to his activity for escape.

But somehow he could not quite bring himself to do it without the semblance of a quarrel with Carvel. And Carvel, who, though occasionally hasty, meddled with nobody's business, was always the first to make

apologies and amends, even when he had been in the right.

Grainer hit upon it, however, as excuses to quarrel can be found even with the most long-suffering of men.

An unusual turmoil in the schoolroom had brought the superintendent on the scene, and Grainer was found in the act of most brutally abusing a boy—one of his favourite butts—who on inquiry was found to have done nothing amiss.

"He has a pick at him!" said the only witness who could be induced to speak. Carvel promised to make inquisition on the following morning himself, and as a result he called for Mr. Simeon Grainer, and remonstrated with him privately in his own room.

"I had intended," said Carvel, "at to-morrow's meeting of directors to ask them to appoint you assistant superintendent in the place of Mr. Hearne Mackenzie, who has suddenly resigned; but your brutality toward the boys is such that I don't know that I can conscientiously do it, Grainer. And it is not a thing of yesterday. Many have noticed it. My attention has been called to it ever since you came here first. I have often been ashamed—yes, actually and positively ashamed, Grainer—when taking visitors over the reformatory to hear the screams of pain coming from your department!"

"I do not take such words from any man," said the schoolmaster, sullenly; "the directors shall judge between us. I have a little paper to put before them which may perhaps prevent you having to show any more visitors about the reformatory. And I am not asking your recommendation as assistant superintendent. I have the best of reasons for knowing that the post of superintendent in chief will soon be vacant. *I mean to apply for that!*"

Carvel burst into a shout of hearty laughter.

"Why, man," he cried, clapping his chest, "I wish you joy. But you may have a long time to wait. I

am as sound as ever I was. I'm not going to turn my toes up to the daisies, that I know of. But if I am—why, you are as welcome to my old shoes as anybody else. You are a good teacher, if only you would be a bit more kindly with the boys!"

Carvel thought no evil. It was not in him. And he scarcely heard the sullen dominie's murmur of anger, "Well, I've warned you, that's all! You can't say but what I've warned you!"

Carvel thought no more about the matter, but went his free, breezy, manly, wholesome, Christian way, distributing praise and blame in the proportions of about ten to one, accompanying his progress through the "shops" with sundry playful pinches on the ears, more decisive raps over the knuckles, and sometimes, in extreme cases, a "lunder" across the shoulder with "clickie"—all which did nobody any harm, but instead raised a laugh as soon as his tall, thin form with the finely cut head and stooping shoulders had passed on to another department.

There was, as Carvel had said, an important meeting of directors called for the morrow under the presidency of Lord Athabasca. The business first on the schedule was the reception of the resignation of Mr. Hearne Mackenzie, on which occasion a statement was expected, either from the young man himself or from his father, as to what his position with regard to the future work of the reformatory would be.

But Hearne's letter, brief and to the point, settled only the financial question. He resigned his position with regret. He had been perfectly happy in the work, but affairs of a private nature had occurred which made it inexpedient that he should longer hold any salaried position in connection with the institution. He asked the court of directors, in their corporate capacity, to accept as a free gift all the bonds which he held upon the property, and, indeed, all his monetary interests in the "Hearne Mackenzie." If it could be called the Athabasca Reformatory, in consideration

of the recent peerage bestowed upon the chairman, his father, he would be still better pleased.

Lord Athabasca was observed to grunt several times during the reading of this letter. He also shuffled his feet, but made no remark beyond the bald statement that he supposed the directors had no choice but to accept the resignation of Mr. Hearne Mackenzie and to pass to the next business.

But the sensation of the meeting was yet to come.

A letter was put into the honorary secretary's hand requesting, on behalf of Mr. Simeon Grainer, schoolmaster at the "Hearne Mackenzie" Reformatory, the honour and favour of an audience. He had something of the highest and most immediate importance to communicate to the honourable the court of directors.

"Oh, hang it!" said Mr. Anthony Cairntable, the bluff, cherubic-faced secretary. "What can the man mean, addressing us in this way? We are not the East India Company or the Court of Chancery! What can he want? An addition to his salary, most likely."

"I suppose we had better have him in and let him say his say!" broke in ex-Banker Murray, of Fellnawe. "I never believe in bottling a man up. If there is bad blood, it may be the better of a little letting!"

But no one had the least idea of what was really coming.

"Show in Mr. Simeon Grainer!"

The senior warder, who rejoiced in the cognomen of Giant Pagan, saluted stolidly, as he would have done if Grainer had been ordered to instant execution, and he left to choose his own firing party. He had been a sergeant in the Black Watch, and his good-humoured countenance expressed when on duty all the ordered Sabbatic pomp characteristic of that formidable regiment.

Mr. Simeon Grainer entered, a little stoutish man, tallowy rather than fat, with eyes that were pale, and

flabby cheeks which trembled, quick, nervous hands, evidently scared into a desperate courage—the gamester's grip on the dicebox when he has staked his all on a single throw.

Carvel sat at the far end of the table—tall, emaciated, with a head compounded of that attributed to the Apostle Peter and that of a certain great general. Carvel was bored. Directors' meetings always bored him. He drummed with long, thin, almost translucent fingers on the table. He knew nothing of what was coming, and if he had known he would not have cared ; only he would have been sorry for Grainer. That was the sort of man Carvel was. If there was any other person to think about before himself, he thought of that person. And even if he had known that Grainer was going to do him the most dastardly act possible as between master and man, " Poor devil ! " is all that Carvel would have said.

The world could do with more Carvels, but the worst of it is that such men are not raised in quantity nor grown from cuttings.

" Well, speak up, schoolmaster ! " said Lord Athabasca, sharply. He had not yet got over his son's letter. The directors stopped sketching on the blotting paper, biting the ends of their pencils, searching their inner breast pockets for quite unnecessary papers, each according to his habit at meetings. They attended to Grainer, looking at him with a calm, dispassionate absence of interest, which was intensely galling to the trembling and treacherous man of tallow.

" I believe," he thought, " they think I am going to complain of the ventilation, or the quality of ink supplied in the school—I'll show them ! "

The rat was in the corner now and showing his teeth.

" I shall have to prove to you," he said, slowly and deliberately, " that your confidence in your present superintendent is misplaced. I can prove that—Mr.—ah—Carvel has systematically been heaping up

money at the expense of the institution. His bank book—his current pass book merely, mind you, gentlemen—came by accident into my hands recently, and I found that he has at this moment more money lying to his credit in the bank than the amount of his legitimate salary for the whole time he has been superintendent of the "Hearne Mackenzie" Reformatory. *Where did this money come from?* From the receipts, gentlemen, by a careful manipulation of the accounts, which have never been properly certified during all these years since the foundation of the reformatory! The present superintendent has brought up and educated a large family on nothing, gentlemen, besides laying away thousands of pounds in the bank! The amount of his other investments I cannot give, but they are considerable. It grieves me, gentlemen, to lay the facts before you, but loyalty to the bread I have eaten, and to the worthy gentlemen I have served in a humble but necessary capacity, emboldens me to take the present step. This very day, gentlemen, the superintendent for the second time offered me the position of assistant, but I refused it as I would have refused any other gift coming from such polluted hands."

Grainer stood a moment, trying to read the effect of his words, his cruel mouth shut like a rat trap and his little eyes passing rapidly from one face to another all about the board-room table. He could read little there. Attention he had certainly gained to the full. Some stirred uneasily and muttered vaguely. Carvel, who alone sat quite unmoved, continued to look at his thin white fingers thoughtfully, as if he were not sure of their number. Lord Athabasca was staring at the schoolmaster with that straight, open-air, "kick-him-downstairs" look which his lordship's opponents in Colonial parliaments had found so disconcerting. There was a faint smile about the mouth of ex-Banker Murray, of Fellnawe, as he played with his pencil.

Encouraged by the silence, Simeon began again: "I think you will allow that the circumstances fully warranted an appeal to you, gentlemen——"

"Fully!" said Lord Athabasca, the strong masculine gust of his voice making all those start who were not looking at him. Only Carvel continued indolently the inspection of the fingers of his left hand. He did not seem satisfied with the little one. Then he held his whole hand up against the window as if to study some problem connected with the circulation of the blood.

"I am glad to hear from your lordship that you consider my appeal fully justified," said Grainer, "and I hope that every gentleman present will understand that I have only spoken out of the highest regard for the best interests of the 'Hearne Mackenzie' Reformatory!"

"Perfectly," said Lord Athabasca, in his clear, dominating voice. "You can now retire, and the directors will consider what course they are to pursue."

"Is not the present superintendent," said Grainer, anxiously clinging to the adjective, "to go out also?"

"We may need some information from Mr. Carvel," said the chairman, quietly. "Meantime *you* can go and wait outside."

"The books of the bank can prove what I say!" he remarked, a little anxiously. "I am speaking the truth."

His lordship waved a hand in the direction of the door. He did not deign Mr. Grainer any further speech.

"See that he waits at the far side of the exercising yard, warder!" ordered my lord.

The ex-"non-com." of the Forty-second saluted the Board as if it had been a court martial.

"He will be finding himself there presently," he murmured. Again saluting, he erected a semaphore hand of brawny stuff—woven steel and four-horse power attachments—at least so Grainer thought the

next moment, as Giant Pagan caught him lingering outside with an ear obviously strained in the direction of the board room.

"To the exercising yard—south side. I'll take ye there *meeself!*" said ex-Sergeant Pagan. And the little stooping slug of a man with the fox's face went trotting across the yard to his appointed station. He demanded of Giant Pagan to be informed why he, a schoolmaster and proximate superintendent, should thus be at the mercy of a mere warder. He threatened. He menaced. His voice cracked and broke. Warder Pagan would certainly lose his position when he got back before the board if he did not instantly let go his collar and give a reason for such treatment.

"Orders!" said ex-Sergeant Pagan. "And shut your mouth!"

He was returning to his sentinel's post when a thought struck him. "And there's your beat," he called back; "from one side o' the yaird to the ither. And if ye come an inch nearer—weel, ye will ken what the rogue's march to clink means in the Forty-twa—and that's something to ken in itsel'!"

In the board room there was a somewhat strained silence. They were all honourable men, but some few of them a little dense. And Carvel's silence and indifference, together with Lord Athabasca's strange manner to Schoolmaster Grainer (who always had a good annual report), might very well conceal something. So they waited and eyed Carvel, without appearing to do so.

Still Carvel did not speak. He had commenced the inspection of the right hand now, and his boot, a-swing over the other leg in his usual languid pose, moved not a beat the faster. But the hearts of all the members did so instead, as is always the case when a man is felt to be on trial for his life. There were two exceptions. Lord Athabasca stared at the shut door, and appeared to listen for the returning footsteps of Giant Pagan, the sentry and guardian in times of

scath. Presently he heard them—stolid, wooden, regular as ever—pass the door, turn at the end of the corridor, and come back, waxing louder till they again began to fade away along the passage to the left. Then Lord Athabasca knew that there would be no listeners to what he was going to say, so long as the ex-"non-com." trod statedly without.

He looked at ex-Banker Murray, who continued to smile into his big moustache, and seemed hugely interested in the accurate pointing of his pencil. Carvel was absorbed in the middle joint of his ring finger. Board meetings were a bore. He had always thought so.

"Gentlemen," said Lord Athabasca, "I don't often quote Scripture—you will bear me out in that—but there's a good deal of solid business in the book which has Proverbs written at the top of each page. He was no fool who wrote it, and what we have heard reminds me of what I was reading last Sunday in church, when the clergyman was addressing 'A Few Words to Mothers.' It was this: 'A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.'"

"No, don't speak, Carvel; you have no need to!" said ex-Banker Murray, hastily.

"I wasn't going to!" said Carvel, in rapt admiration of the pale half-moon at the base of his middle finger.

"Twenty words or thereby, gentlemen, will be enough," continued Lord Athabasca. "Indeed, far too many to waste upon this fellow—pestilent, ill-conditioned, treacherous rascal that he is. Mr. Carvel our excellent superintendent, when he first came, at the beginning of our reformatory work, found us, to put it plainly, in something of a hole. My own resources were for the moment locked up. My son had spent—all that was his to spend. We had the option of one week to purchase a large piece of land for our present workshops. At that time, anxious

enough for all who were then on the committee of immediate direction, Mr. Carvel came nobly to our aid. He became the creditor of the institution to the extent of several thousand pounds. He insisted, solely out of his natural delicacy, that the matter should be kept secret. 'How can the directors deal properly with me for my sins if such a thing were to come out?' he said. Well, gentlemen, it did *not* come out. But a further gift of—my son—Mr. Hearne Mackenzie, upon his coming of age, and the continued prosperity of the institution, put it in our power to pay off our generous creditors, first of whom was Mr. Superintendent Carvel, who had sold house property in Newcastle in order to oblige us in our time of need. This money, a very considerable sum, had just been paid over, and was lodged in the bank pending reinvestment, when Mr. Carvel, thinking no evil, confided his bank pass book to this sneaking hound—*wha-a-at*——?"

One and all the directors were on their feet, crowding round Carvel and insisting on shaking him by the hand. The tall man seemed a little scandalised at the proceedings, but finally shook hands, as it were, under protest. Then he sat down, and once more regarded the toe of his boot.

"Ah, well!" said Lord Athabasca, "I am glad that no more need be said. Mr. Secretary, tell us on what terms we stand with this fellow—Grainer, the schoolmaster, I mean."

"A month's notice, but with liberty to dismiss for bad behaviour," said the secretary.

"Dismiss—dismiss!" cried half a dozen voices. Then Carvel rose hastily, stirred to speech at last.

"Gentlemen," he said, "he has an old father whose heart would be broken if you did this hastily. I know him. Let the man send in his resignation—to me. Tell him to clear out in a week's time. He is a good teacher, but an overstrict disciplinarian—thrashes the boys too much, you know—for an insti-

tution of this kind. You can put it in the minutes as that. Then, at least, he will have a chance for his life."

And those who were nearest Carvel assert to this day that they heard him mutter "Poor devil" under his breath as he sat down.

At any rate, it would have been just like Carvel if he had.

Giant Pagan was summoned.

"Bid Schoolmaster Grainer to come this way!" said Lord Athabasca.

Sergeant Pagan marched along the echoing corridor, tramped down the steps, and crossed the exercising yard as if on parade. Then he came on a different man from the one he had left. Waxen yellow was Grainer's face. His mouth, once so cruel, twitched at intervals. There was a frightened, furtive look in his pale eyes, which had taken on a red watery rim all about them as if the man had been weeping.

"The craitur!" scorned Sergeant Pagan. "An' I thocht he was a man!"

He motioned his prisoner to follow him, and marched back to the board room.

Lord Athabasca was standing up in his place at the table head, the other directors looking curiously at him. Only Carvel sat sorrowfully apart, with bowed head.

"All right," thought Schoolmaster Simeon; "I have pulled it off again."

"Mr. Grainer," said Lord Athabasca, "I will not dwell on your shameful wickedness; I will only —what may touch you more—point out what a fool you have been. The money which you saw credited to Mr. Carvel in his pass book had been loaned to the reformatory for many years. Mr. Carvel had sold property to establish this institution, in which from the first he has been no hireling. At long and last, we were able to repay him. He had refused interest, so that there was restored to him only the

net sum we borrowed. Do you understand that clearly? Speak out, if you do not!"

There was a thick silence as the waxy, stricken, dough-faced, tallowy man stood wavering before them as if about to fall but did not know to which side.

"For these malicious lies, for your inexcusable attitude to your superior officer, you are from this moment to consider yourself as dismissed—dismissed without appeal—in disgrace!"

Lord Athabasca let this sink in. Then he added:

"But at the request of Mr. Carvel, and out of pity for your aged father, you are to be permitted to send in your resignation—to Mr. Carvel—within a week. Now, go, sir. We never wish to see your face again!"

The man stood moving his lips without achieving speech. He fought chokingly with his words. But all that could be made out was only a stray syllable here and there, which came forth as it were foam flecked with the curses of bitter hate.

"Carvel—Carvel—hounds—devils!" he spluttered.

Lord Athabasca rapped smartly with his knuckle three times. It was the signal for Giant Pagan, late of the Forty-second Regiment—a useful man.

The door opened, and the tall, grim, clear-eyed man stood within, almost filling it up from post to post.

"See that man safe to the schoolmaster's house!" said Lord Athabasca.

"Come!" said the sergeant, his iron hand upon the quivering arm, which appeared a moment on the point of resistance.

One turn, curiously spinning in its character, owing to a "rick" given to the bone—only to be learned when on Saturday night picket duty in Giant Pagan's old regiment—then a steady progression to the door, singularly swift, when you saw it sideways, and the schoolmaster found himself outside. Then all the wild beast in him, prisoned till that moment, broke bounds. He bent his head swifter than the eye could

follow its movements and bit Giant Pagan sharply in the wrist. The "clout" which he received the next moment on the side of his head would certainly have floored Mr. Simeon Grainer had he not been firmed up on the other side by another "clout" equally solid. Thus alternately supported, and very "muzzy" as to details, he reached his own house. The ex-sergeant opened the door and flung him in.

"If you come out without bein' told," he said, "I'll break your neck!"

And from the then condition of his head, Schoolmaster Simeon Grainer believed him as to his neck.

You may learn many things in the "Forty-twa," by the time you come to be a full sergeant, twice medalled, with the largest attainable pension. For one, you know Simeon Grainers at sight, and you also learn how to handle them as they deserve.

Giant Pagan washed his hand at the pump and went into the little hospital, where, consulting a book about first remedies, he put on some ointment recommended in cases of bites of mad dogs. He passed the paragraph about cauterising the wound.

"He's not worth it, him—the cur!" he said, as he went back to his sentry-go in front of the boardroom door.

CHAPTER XIX

PLOT THE THIRD—AND LAST

YET "mad dog" was no bad description of the condition of Simeon Grainer as he sat down to send in his resignation of the post he had so long held at the "Peat" Reformatory. Pleasures the most savoury instantly grew tasteless to him. He could not even properly cane the boys, who by their misdeeds offered themselves for that exercise—once so dear to the spirit of Simeon Grainer that he used to think of it the first thing in the morning as other men do of their sweethearts.

The first plot, the deceitful one, had succeeded beyond his thought. The second, the dangerous one, had brought him to most utter shipwreck. But his heart was not humiliated. He was all the more bitterly set on revenge. There was nothing now at which he would stop to be even with Carvel and with the directors.

Duffus arose in his mind. And he went out forthwith to hang up the key—his master-key which would soon be no longer his—in the place designated, upon a nail in the outer door of his small, red brick house with the tiny patch of garden in front. As he came out of his sitting-room, where he had been writing in the warm yellowish glow of the paraffin lamp, it seemed that he felt in his face a waft of keen moorland air. It struck him that he had left the door open, yet, on going forward, he found it shut as usual. The neighbourhood of something mysterious told on his nerves, already jarred by the events of

the afternoon and the heavy hand of ex-Sergeant Giant Pagan, of the "Forty-twa." He turned the door key in the lock, and hung up the master-key on the nail by the hat pegs, as he had arranged with Duffus. In a quarter of an hour he had the curiosity to take the lamp in his hand and go again to the hat pegs. The key was not there, but the outer door was locked as before.

The schoolmaster returned to his place, wondering, but not for long. The smashing of all his hopes—the lost chance of the superintendentship, which had seemed almost within his grasp—even the little self-contained house across the road, in which Hearne Mackenzie had dwelt, which had really been his—or as good—these things filled his mind so that he did not hear the stealthy movements which went on most of the night about and within his dwelling.

In the morning the key was back in its place, and the plot desperate, that of Duffus of the red tie, well under way.

. . . . .

Now it has so happened that for some time "Blind Jacob's," the Cowgate, Mr. Missionary Molesay, even Patricia, have had to give place to the concerns of the "Peat" Reformatory, as these have been thrust on our attention by the sojourn there of McGhie's Kid; yet all the time these neglected persons, and especially the professors of the gentle art of burgling, have been approaching the path of our story. They have never really ceased their activities, though Knifer Jackson has as yet failed to find a boy of the intelligence and simplicity of the Kid or a general assistant of the calibre of Duffus.

The situation will be made plainer by following a few of the doings of Duffus. These were curious in the extreme. He had for several nights occupied his spare time in making a collection of inflammable objects—shavings from the workshops, rags, chips,

torn wrappings and newspapers, and especially the thin, long shreddings which are used for packing the uppers of boots as they arrive at the boot factory. These Duffus disposed in heaps under the floor of the main school building of the " Peat " Reformatory. It was easy for him to start a plank in the floor and nail it down again. These artful arrangements he saturated thoroughly with paraffin, dripping, varnish, resin, and colza oil, according as he could lay hands on inflammable materials without attracting attention. Some sporting powder, which Mr. Hearne had left behind him in his house, served to lay the trains upon a ground prepared with torn tissue paper soaked in petroleum.

At nine of the evening of Friday all was ready. Letters had been passed to and fro between the heads of " Blind Jacob's " and Duffus of the red tie. There was a big " job " on for that Friday night. In evil as in good, one hand serves to wash the other. The escape of No. 680 would certainly clear the way for the larger work of Corn Beef Joe and the Knifer. There could be no abler recruit than Master Duffus in any department of professional work.

Mysterious notes arranging all this had been carried to the little town by the " pony boy," who had delivered them into the hands of a shawled woman—no other than the Kid's mother—who, however, never once asked after her son. The mother may, indeed, forget the child. Mad Mag had lost all interest in her son from the moment he had espoused his father's side in an early quarrel. The Knifer had, indeed, quite another hold over Mag. In him she had, for the first time, met her master, but even he could not make her love her son.

On Friday Duffus worked all day in the shops. He answered to his number at roll call. He was in his place when the evening porridge was served out. He had been seen in his dormitory, which was not that in which the Kid slept. Nothing of the abnormal,

nothing at all remarkable! Duffus knew how to be a model reformatory boy, just as, when it came to prison, he would become at once a model prisoner, and depart the spoiled darling of the chaplains.

But, though no one saw him leave the dormitory —save, it may be, one or two "chaps in the know" —Duffus had been downstairs more than once before eleven o'clock struck from the stable clock of Castle Egham.

Now Warder Pagan was responsible for No. 3 dormitory—Duffus's room—and though faithful in many things, the ex-sergeant had one fault. He loved to look upon the whisky when it gave its colour aright—fine, pale straw yellow was his preference —in the tall tumblers. Being an Argyllshire man, he swore by "Long John," and sometimes on his return from the Kingside Inn, when pay night was not yet too distant, his head seemed so completely in the clouds, that it appeared to him that he must be the original "Long John" himself, striding down the mountains toward Fort William over the famous succession of "aughteen fääls!"

On these occasions his inspection of Dormitory No. 3 was very cursory indeed, and a bundle of clothes with the coverlet pulled high about them might very safely represent the absent Duffus.

Yet Warder Pagan had passed within two yards of Duffus as he entered the yard, stamping with his feet to show how firmly he stood on his pins, and whistling as he regarded the stars. He fumbled a little with his pass key, and hummed:

> "Honest auld Symon Brodie,
> Stupit auld doitit bodie!
> I'll awa' to the North Countrie,
> To see auld Symon Brodie!"

"Dear me," he said, "what's that?"

He broke his song off short. It seemed as if a shadow had fled from beneath his left armpit out into

the darkness. With the beautiful logic of those who have partaken of the barley brew, he struck a match and looked well about him—of course thus being unable to see three yards. Then he resumed the humming where he had left it off:

> "Symon Brodie had a coo,
> The coo was lost; he couldna find her:
> When he had dune what man could do,
> The coo cam' hame—her tail behind her!"

All was right in the Dormitory No. 3. The lamp was burning and the boys asleep, only silence and the heavy hush of breathing down the long double row of beds. Warder Pagan regarded his own bed with suspicion. It seemed to him the only thing not behaving as it ought. It would persist in running round the room. Three times he tried to take it, as it were, on the fly. Three times he came heavily to grass on the carpetless floor. Then Warder Pagan said to himself, shaking his head wisely, "This will never do, sergeant! Whaur are your tactics? And you a prop o' the 'Forty-twa!'"

And so waiting in the full track of the revolving couch, he intercepted it successfully at last, held a moment by the round brass knob, and then threw himself fully dressed upon it. He laughed low to himself, admiring his own cleverness.

"It tak's a 'non-com' of ten years' standing to do a thing like that!" he said. "Thought it would get away from me, didn't it? Na, na, I was in the Black Watch!"

And he firmly refused to give this erratic bedstead another chance. Take off his clothes? Well, he knew a trick worth two of that. Why, as like as not it would be off again. So he decided to go to sleep fully dressed as he was, rather than run any foolish risks. And, indeed, it was as well for No. 3 Dormitory and for the inhabitants of the "Hearne Mackenzie"

Reformatory that he did so, as, in time, we shall see.

. . . . .

Having returned from another day of fruitless search after the missing Patricia, concerning whom he had been unable to extract any further information from Baby Lant, Hearne Mackenzie fell asleep in the gable room of the bare two-storied house which was the Kingside Inn.

The larger Scottish hostelries in market towns are mostly marvels of discomfort—crowded and odorous with dripping waterproofs and stertorous drovers one day in the seven, silent and inhospitable as the grave for the rest of the week—as has been sung by an admirable poet concerning a Welsh house of public entertainment, so be it recorded of them :

> Whenever you go to Dolgelly,
> Don't stop at the "Anchor" Hotel !
> They'll give you no meat for your stomach,
> The waiter won't answer the bell !

So of the larger, of all indeed, save the few best. But the smaller inns are often run upon quite a different scale of comfort. It all depends upon the landlady, and still more (if she has any) upon the landlady's daughters. This fact, and several others that were pleasant and grateful to a home-coming, weary, wet, and tired man, Hearne Mackenzie experienced at the Kingside Inn. That he was in love with Pat did not hinder him from receiving a vague but real pleasure from the observation that the (returned) girls of the house were pretty. Indeed, to tell the truth, the welcome he received at that warm fireside, and the chat which went on about that cheerful ingle while his supper was frizzling in the pan, more than made up to the natural man in him for the naked and mournful solitude of the brick house across the way in which he had lived so long at the "Peat."

Being honest with himself, Hearne Mackenzie recognised that for the time being, and while his money enabled him to continue his search for Patricia, the Kingside Inn was the best home he could have.

So on the night of Friday he went to bed early. Wet from head to foot, he had come home, stumbling vaguely over the moss. His soaked garments being hung to dry in front of the kitchen fire, he had clad himself from head to foot in the homespun of the late landlord, which gave him the look of a comfortable store farmer whose girth had prospered in direct ratio to his bank account. But the unaccustomed tickling of the wincey shirts, the rough rig-and-fur drawers and socks, together with the warmth within produced by the ham-and-egg tea, and the memory of the evil night he had left without, predisposed him to slumber.

Hearne Mackenzie went to bed early—indeed, at nine o'clock precisely. He stepped out of the clothes of the late landlord of the Kingside Inn as a small boy might out of a pair of his father's sea boots, and in five minutes he found himself between the roughish, but clean and lavender-smelling sheets belonging to Mrs. McWhan.

He was awakened at something like twenty minutes past midnight by a faint scent in the room which somehow recalled Canada to him. He sat up and sniffed. "The forest on fire," he said; "but it isn't the time of the year to do much damage."

Now there was a lustre in Hearne's room—one of those tinkling, fly-freckled, prismatic, gigantic eardrop sort of ornaments only to be found in old houses, ugly when clean and impossible when dirty. Leaning back, Hearne's eyes closed promptly, yet something seemed to move to and fro before his vision like those fire shapes which one can make of different colours by tightening or relaxing the lids after looking at anything bright. Hearne amused himself with this for some time.

But a continuance of the multicoloured quiverings presently informed him that he was receiving other and newer impressions from somewhere or other. He glanced at the lustre, which hung, a mysterious pearl-gray shape over his head, sucking up the starlight that filtered through the uncurtained windows of his room. It was all starred with little darting flecks of orange and crimson.

Hearne rubbed his eyes. He was, he thought, the victim of a colour delusion. He had often suffered from them after working too long over the reformatory books, or when getting up, for an examination at college, some subject in which he was tremendously interested. Black cats in corners, seen over the shoulder, which vanished slowly as you went toward them—little zigzag lightnings in the eyes which caused the print on a page to melt and run together as if suddenly "pied"—he knew the proper medical formula for that—rest, open air, and the exhibition of a certain simple domestic medicine.

But these little darting flames and flashing signals aloft in the lustre could not be thus interpreted. Hearne Mackenzie sprang out of bed. He looked through the little gable window of Kingside Inn, and, lo! the "Peat" Reformatory, the pride of his heart, was going up to the heavens in sheet on sheet of pale, yellowish flame!

Duffus of the red tie had made no miscalculation.

With what rapidity, with what haste of adjustment, Hearne Mackenzie got into his—that is, the landlord's—clothes he was never able afterwards to recall. He saw his life-work passing away in a flame. He seemed to hear the cry of human souls in agony going up like so many mounting sparks.

He swung himself down from his low first-floor window. The rest of the Kingside Inn was wrapped in deep sleep, but he did not wait for that. Hearne Mackenzie was on the point of rushing off in the direction of the reformatory, which blazed like a torch

across the moor. But a wiser thought arrested him. Also he observed something.

He could see hordes of small, antlike figures rushing this way and that about the houses and out of the yard. The alarm had been given. It was the detached and uninhabited schoolrooms and the old dining-rooms which were in flames. The fire had not yet caught the dormitories, the residence of Carvel, the superintendent, or the "shops" with their valuable machinery.

In brief, much—most, indeed—might yet be saved! But this much was certain; carrying water in cans was of no use. What they wanted was a fire engine. He had always thought of buying one for the "Peat," but an unblessed want of funds had hitherto stood in the way. However, there was one at Three Ridings, his father's house. He would go there. If he found Hutton, the coachman, and one or two gardeners whom he knew for reliable men, he could get it to the "Peat" in time to save the most valuable portions of the institution, and those which it would take the longest to replace.

Without a thought of the clothes he was wearing, he hurried across the moor in the direction of the Three Ridings. There was a short cut. Hearne knew every step of the way. First there was the black and trackless moss. Then before him would stand up a long promontory of tall trees with a patriarch among pines towering high in the midst. That was the landmark. So much the light from the burning school would show him.

After that it was plain sailing. Cutting through the green gloom of the pine-belt, he descended sharply a tiny pathway that curved and twisted, half overgrown with Solomon's Seal and ground ivy. In the hollow Hearne turned sharply at right angles across a bridge, which some early landscape-gardening proprietor of Three Ridings had erected across the river. It was high in the middle, but too narrow

for even the swag-bellied carriages of ancient times. The easy archæology of the neighbourhood had named it "The Roman Bridge," though it obviously dated about 1740, or thereabouts.

At any rate, Hearne crossed it hotfoot without heeding its date. Then he scaled the bank opposite so as to come out upon the three-cornered plateau on which stood Three Ridings. For whereas Egham and the "Peat" were set out baldly on the crown of the moorland, Three Ridings was emphatically down in the valley. Little green dells surrounded it on every side, rivers ran about it, and birds chanted. The spring flowers came earliest, the autumn ones lingered longest, about the south-looking dells and sheltered holms of Three Ridings, now the property of the rich Lord Athabasca, who had paid a great price to call it his own, and had spent so much money on it since.

But even from Three Ridings the flare of the burning "Peat" could be seen, and, as he ran, Hearne could hear the distant calling of voices and the crashing of underbrush as unseen men charged through it in that wild excitement "to see a fire" which possesses all country people—the panic which is so incomprehensible to the *blasé* folk of towns, who will hardly go to the window for a thing so slight, and then only in the hope that by good luck the whooping fire engines may run over somebody.

Up the steep brow, the last part on his hands and knees, climbed Hearne, as careless of ways and means as if he had been in the heart of the northern Sioux country where he was born. But he moved silently, as became the son of his grandfather. He went like Crowfoot, that great chief, not like those other charging asses up there. No one came near him as he approached the silent house. It loomed up suddenly before him, massive and black. A candle was being carried from room to room on the second story. Some frightened maid, perhaps, thought

Hearne, or the butler seeing that everything was locked up.

He skirted the pheasant-rearing shrubbery, all marled and patched with scars where the hen mothers had made to themselves dust baths, then through an archway to the stables. The door of the engine house was open! Hurrah!

The alarm had been given, and they had taken it off at once. Well done! There was some hope for the brains of domestic servants after all. A livery did not quite destroy the soul, as Hearne had previously supposed. But the candle? Evidently there were those in the house, wakeful and perhaps anxious. At least he could ease his father's anxiety. He remembered with a kind of pride and thankfulness how deeply interested the old man had always been in the "Hearne Mackenzie." Even at that present moment was he not chairman of the board of directors? Hearne would lay aside all angry feelings, and, man to man, as indeed Athabasca and his son always treated each other, he would tell his father the hopes he had that the better portion of the buildings and, indeed, all that was intrinsically most valuable, all the wage-earning part, might yet be saved—especially if the men with the Three Ridings' engine arrived in time.

The back door was locked, which somewhat astonished him. He had thought that of a certainty that part of the house would be the first astir, in order to see strange things. The wild flurry of the mounting flames, licking the few visible stars, the distant but quite distinct crackle of the burning timbers, the far-carried smell of the wood smoke, were all strongly in evidence in the rear of the house. He had expected half the servants of Three Ridings to be congregated there, perhaps using the opportunity to do a little private jesting and "spooning," as on such occasions servants are wont to do. But to find *nobody*—Hearne Mackenzie was not prepared for that.

It was the same at the side door. Locked firm and fast it was—silence all about, save for that far-off warning crackle up on the moor.

"Have they gone off in a body?" said Hearne to himself—"my father at the head of them? That is it. I would not put it past him, even at his time of life. What an old Nor'wester he is!"

And a something of pride swelled in his heart.

He went to the front door and mounted the steps. The fire was not visible from there, but the odour of burning came clearly to his nostrils. He laid his hand on the great oaken door, ready to knock with the immense brazen knocker which his father had brought long ago from Venice. It was a clever imitation, and Lord Athabasca had paid for it as being the original and authentic knocker of the prison of the Doges. Nobody had dared to enlighten him since.

But Hearne Mackenzie's hand did not reach the knocker. The door moved inward! It had not been closed at all! What abominable carelessness! He would have them all out of the house to-morrow. They were getting too fat, like that fellow in the Bible—Jeshurun, wasn't it? But he, Hearne Mackenzie, would do the kicking! He would not have his father imposed upon by a pack of lazy good-for-nothings.

He pushed the door open and found himself in the great silent hall hung with trophies of the chase—mostly taken over from the previous occupant. A few were his own, and, being fond of them, he could have put his hand on them in the dark. The head of a buck moose, the mask of a wood bison, and, finest and most difficult of all to obtain, the whole upper part of a musk ox, standing out of a wooden panel, painted with brown gray and marish green to resemble the Barren Ground plants on which he had found it feeding.

But in the house nothing—no one—no sound.

Hearne laughed silently. He might have been a burglar in his own father's house. But that candle? He must find out who that was. So he mounted the deeply carpeted stairs three at a time till he came to his father's sitting room. Ha—at last—there was a light in there! The candle must have been carried by Lord Athabasca, who was himself looking to the defences in the absence of the servants, doubtless all dispatched to see the burning "Peat!" And now—he would warn his father with their old hunting call—the call of the Sioux on the night trail.

And the sound of his voice echoed weirdly through the silent house! Strange that his father did not answer! He must have fallen asleep in his chair, no infrequent thing. He always had a burnt hole or two on the breast of his smoking jacket, where the red ends of his cigarettes had alighted.

"Father, it is I—Hearne! Can I come in?"

There was no stir in the room or in the house, aloft or below. Behind the closed blinds of the staircase window he could see the dancing of the flames on the table-land. Hearne pushed the door open. A green student's lamp with a shade was arranged for quiet reading. His father sat quietly in the great chair with a book on his knees.

But he was dead—a knife in his throat.

CHAPTER XX

PARRICIDE

At the Ravensnuik police office the honest inspector heavily and conscientiously cautioned Hearne that whatever he might say would be used against him.

It was the first lightning flash of insight into the possibilities of his position. He had run all the way from the Three Ridings to the police station. The "Peat"—twenty "Peats" might burn for him now. He found the inspector, a massive, silent man with a wooden manner, sitting solitary over a ledger. The Bible, the "Confession of Faith," and the "History of the Clan McKay," occupied a shelf along with a volume of pasted police-court cuttings, a tin of tobacco, and two pairs of handcuffs.

"It's certainly *primus fashious*," said Inspector McKay, when Hearne had finished. "I am sorry, sir, but my obvious duty is to detain you—as accessory, if not principal, in your father's murder. I don't say you're guilty, sir. Indeed, I believe not. I've seen a heap o' good that you've done up there at the old 'Peat,' and I never heard a word again' ye! It's not what *I* think, but what others would think if ye was to run away from inquiry! I'm with you, sir, and it'll not be my fault if I can't lay my hand on the guilty parties, and have you discharged without a stain, as the Good Book says! But in the meantime ye shall have my own spare room. But—you will excuse me if I turn the key in the lock."

The quiet, dusky-skinned grandson of the great chief Crowfoot said no word. He only nodded, and told Mr. Inspector McKay that he would have done

the same in his place. Then he marched calmly to the "spare room," which had bars to the window and a special lock and bolt to the door outside, but inside was comfortable enough.

Not that that made much difference to Hearne Mackenzie, who sat till break of day on the edge of the bed. The inspector, coming in sharply at eight, found him thus in the clear light of the morning.

"If I were you, sir, I would wash my face and hands—but first, come here, Graham. I must warn you, sir, that it is my duty to enter on the books of the station the condition in which you entered it, as to your person. You have blood on your hands and face. Your hands are torn, and your clothes are another man's—of which I make no doubt whatever but that you can give a sufficient explanation. Still, it is my duty to constitute an exact account of all relevant circumstances on the offeeshial books of the station. Also it is Officer Graham's duty to sign as a witness the deposition of his superior officer. And with these few remarks" (concluded the inspector, who had Highland preaching blood in him), "I will leave you to the enjoyment of your breakfast."

How Hearne enjoyed his breakfast in these circumstances may be imagined.

But next morning a little party of two was speeding toward Ravensnuik with that in their hearts which was calculated to cause Hearne Mackenzie to enjoy his meals better.

"Inspector McKay?"

"That is my name!"

The big, square-built man filled up the doorway as determinedly as if he had been part of the building itself. None should pass that way without his permission.

"I am Archbold Molesay, the police missionary from the city, and I come with this young lady to see Mr. Hearne Mackenzie!"

"It is quite impossible," quoth the dour inspector, holding himself officially rigid.

"I think not quite," insinuated Archbold Molesay gently, like a sunbeam asking permission to enter the window of a guarded castle; "here is a line or two from Captain Henderland to your address."

The countenance of Inspector McKay changed.

"You know him?" inquired Archbold Molesay, looking up.

"Know him!" the cry burst involuntarily from the bushy beard of the country officer with a kind of break of admiration in his voice. Does a colour-sergeant know the commander-in-chief? Does a month-old curate, still wearing with pride his first M.B. waistcoat, know the archbishop of his diocese? Of course Inspector McKay, of the country force, knew the great Captain Henderland, who had been head of the metropolitan police when he was a little shaver scudding in scanty kilts over a Highland croft. Know him? Yes, indeed!

After this he ushered them in at once, Mr. Molesay and—Patricia.

This was the paragraph which had brought them so far and so fast. It was a triumph of local reporting, ruthlessly cut down by an unsympathetic night editor, who had some feeling left for the severities of style, in spite of twenty years of newspaper work:

"SUPPOSED PARRICIDE MURDER.* A painful sensation has been caused by the discovery, at the very moment when the 'Hearne Mackenzie' Reformatory was in danger of destruction by fire, of the death by violence of its chairman of directors, the Right Hon. Lord Athabasca. The name of Lord Athabasca is well known to all. His career in the colonies was distinguished in the extreme, yet he seems to have met his death by the cruel hands of a

* The striking word "PARRICIDE" had been hastily deleted here with a splash of blue pencil.

wilful murderer. The alarm was given by the son of the murdered man [who had been for some time lurking in the neighbourhood, and who was discovered in disguise in the castle of Three Ridings, the residence of Lord Athabasca, with whom he had quarrelled]. A suspected person is at present in custody. The capture was made at once through the zeal and determination of Inspector Sergeant McKay [who, during his stay in Ravensnuik, has shown himself such an active officer, and has so much endeared himself to ratepayers and property holders by his watchful diligence]. Inspector McKay deserves the highest credit for his capture of the daring assailant [who, strange to say, is no other than the only son of the murdered man]."

This, *without the brackets*, was the way the local reporter wrote it. Omitting the bracketed parts, the slightly shortened version reveals the ideas of the night editor of *The Thistle* newspaper upon the law of libel, and on what really constitutes "news" as distinguished from advertisement.

Having read which Patricia had insisted upon "going at once to him."

Mr. Molesay mildly objected, saying that in any case Hearne would be brought to the city that day for examination, and without doubt interned in the Calton. It would be far easier, therefore, to wait. But Pat instantly demanded if Mr. Molesay considered it a time for waiting. As for herself she would go at once, and if the gate of the Ravensnuik Jericho did not open before her, she would march round and round it till the walls fell down.

Mr. Molesay smiled gently. He knew all about such a temperament. It was what he himself did with the citadel of Satan in the Cowgate. He had been marching a long time about it and about, yet the falling of the walls seemed as remote as ever. Still, he had made a breach or two. He smiled, and

extorting from Pat McGhie a promise that she would not start without him, he went off to see his friend Captain Henderland. The "couple of lines" was the result, and the result of the couple of lines was that wondrously reverent look on Inspector McKay's face, as he saluted and ushered them in as to a presence chamber.

"Hearne!" said Patricia, using a name she had never before laid tongue to.

Utterly dazed, he stood up mechanically. She went directly to him, and put her arms about his neck.

"I came at once," she said aloud, and then kissed him, which certainly she had never even dreamed of doing to any man.

Perforce Mr. Molesay remained where he was, his bare head gleaming more gently argentine than ever, in the dull light of Inspector McKay's "spare room." He was wondering if after all there might not be something better in the world than the trying to save souls—if he had not, indeed, needlessly missed something in that daily warfare of his for "the Kingdom which is within" every man.

Then he went to the window and, with an assumption of extraordinary interest, gazed out at the lonesome patch of yard, walled and spiked, where there seemed to be a hapless hen scratching between each several blade of grass—and yet there were not many hens, either.

Mr. Archbold Molesay tried to shut his ears to the murmuring behind him. It was not for him, all that, but for younger men—with heads blond and brown and black—not silvery and fine, with the hairs growing scanter and scanter about the temple.

"Ah, me!" said Mr. Molesay.

Had he done his duty? He had tried. He recalled the inspired Word upon the subject, and tried to extract comfort out of it. "I commend unto you

Phœbe our sister . . . receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints . . . assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you." Yes, that was it. Had he done it—he, Archbold Molesay, to whom now the very emptiness of his own heart was a mockery?

The hens pecked listlessly in their twenty feet square of yard. One with a little more vigour tried to fly. A sky of octagonal wide-meshed wire fencing brought the soarer down to earth again with a protesting "*H-r-r-r-r-r-o-o-o-p!*"

It was like the sky above the Cowgate. And he, Archbold Molesay, was like that checked but still aspiring bird.

Love was young. Love was warm. There was nothing in the world which made life—real life—but only that. And he had shut himself out of it. This meeting in the prison cell of two young lovers—one of them attainted of the most terrible crime in the world, the other coming direct and swift to her mate, like the homing dove, to speak words which had been unspoken in hours of good fortune—touched him more than the year-in-and-year-out domesticity of Harry Rodgers and his wife. It was more akin to his heart somehow. There was a wild-wood, savage spirit in it which was still dear to him, though he had passed his life among roofs and walls, many of which sheltered criminals, ticket-of-leave men, the scum of all the rascaldom of the capital.

A word caught his ear over his shoulder—ah, how much against his will! It was Patricia's voice. But oh, how changed—soft as the dove's in the woods of Romano, where, in the long summer afternoons, a truant boy, named Archbold, had lain, strangely moved, and listened to it.

"Beloved," said the voice. "Oh, *my* beloved!"

"And what," cried Archbold Molesay's heart resentfully, as he watched the poor, droopy, caged fowls without, "what is thy beloved more than another's beloved, O thou fairest among women?"

And then there came back the instant response, swift as the glinting of the lightning from one world's verge to the other, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. . . . His head . . . bushy, and black as a raven." Mr. Molesay's swift mind, trained in the letter of Scripture from his youth up, ran over all that marvellous ascription, ending with "His mouth is most sweet . . . he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem."

He murmured twice, "This is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem."

His eyes followed the poor caged bipeds scraping and pecking over their eternal cinder heap, and he strove to give to the Song of Songs its conventional spiritual meaning—that in which he had been instructed at college; but the low murmur behind, in the direction of which he dared not turn, somehow gave the lie to the conventional exegesis. No, it meant earthly love. And God permitted it. More—God offered it to every man. He, Archbold Molesay, had missed it. He was now an old man. What a fool—what a terrible fool!

Then, when it was the lowest of the tide with him, came the answer, strong, sudden, as a wind fresh and salt from the sea.

The Cowgate, that dim place in which his life was cast, himself out at all hours, midnight and dawn, and in that ghastly betwixt and between when he seemed to walk down there as in a city of the dead—could he ask a woman to share that—to live there as he lived? It was not as if he had a congregation, a church, a manse, like Rodgers. And God knew it was hard enough, even as it was, for Laura Rodgers. Often he had pitied her, and if she had not had children—well, the position would have been untenable. But for him—Archbold Molesay, city missionary, police forlorn hope—no—it was not to be thought of. And indeed had better not be.

What were they saying now? He would not listen. Yet he did. He could not help it.

"Hearne," said the voice he could hear—the other spoke too low, too hoarse, or not at all; "of course I do not believe a word of it. That is why I am here—why I came at once. They may separate us, my beloved, for a while, but you will know—you will know. You are sure that I shall not forget you for a moment."

Apparently Hearne was sure. The silence and the low sobbing said so in a way that little Mr. Molesay understood instinctively. He winced and bowed his silver head yet lower on his bosom. All this was hard to bear.

"I knew—I knew," he reproached himself, "yet what right has he? I saved her. I took her out of the danger. I sought her. She was my one ewe lamb—and now for all that she cares nothing—nothing. She never thinks of me, but only of this man!"

"For shame, Archbold Molesay!" persisted the stiller, smaller voice. "For shame! You know better than that, Archbold Molesay. On THAT DAY when the books are opened your motives will read better on the pages written by the angel of the accounts. To you that girl was only an unhappy woman—nothing more. You would have done as much for her who lieth in wait, for her whose house inclineth unto death. You did more, infinitely more, for poor, foolish Kate Earsman. And now, like a whimpering fool, you cry out, just because she has done what you always knew she would do—just because you have been finding an excuse every day, as it passed over your head, to go down to Rodgers', to see another man's sweetheart, and so forget your folk, your message, and your God!"

Thus the voice, which now at the last sounded louder than Sinai's thunders echoing from the hill of Musa even to Katherina.

And after that Archbold Molesay heard no more

the young lovers' voices. For his mission had come upon him.

"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink" (neither the love of women); "but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For only he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men!"

Factum est! It was done—through the octagonals of the wired hencoop, past the dim, smoky bars of his Cowgate prison, Archbold Molesay saw a door opened in heaven, heard a voice that said "Come up hither!" And lo! immediately he was in the spirit . . . lifted into the third heaven . . . in the body or out of the body, he could not tell. Only this he knew, that he, too, heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. And after that neither thorn in the flesh, how fair soever the rose of love which might have bloomed on that thorn, nor any messenger of Satan, had power to buffet Archbold Molesay any more. He had dreed his weird, trodden the desert sands, passed this Jordan, and now was free of the larger freedom, having proved his work, and, knowing himself, he felt strong enough to bear his own burden.

"And noo, the time's up," said Inspector McKay dryly, who for some time had been knocking at the door all unheard. "It is my duty to take my prisoner in to the Calton. And" (he turned to Hearne) "I have to warn ye, offeeshially, while personally believin' ye innocent o' the crime chairged, that whatever ye may say will be used against ye!"

CHAPTER XXI

CAPTAIN HENDERLAND, CHIEF OF POLICE

MEANWHILE in a very matter-of-fact office in the High Street, amid a constant to-and-fro of footsteps without, not one of which dared turn aside to interrupt his privacy, sat "the chief." He was not a tall man, this Captain Henderland, but many a street bully and hulking bruiser went through life with the impression that he was a very Samson with the height of a Saul. He had a quiet manner, and a way of stroking the top of his head as if to keep the ideas from rising too quickly—or, as it were, "swarming" away like bees on a fine July Sabbath day among the hives.

He was talking to the procurator fiscal, a sharp, thick-set man, without particular physiognomy save a pair of boring gray eyes, which had the most curious effect of rendering probable ill-doers very angry. It was different with Henderland. His manner to a possible criminal seemed to say, "Here sits your best friend. Trust in me. Make a clean breast of it, and it will be the better for us both."

And, indeed, very often he was perfectly right.

So well did the fiscal know his power (or his weakness) that he always charged Henderland with the private examination or precognosing, while he sat apparently absorbed in taking notes, without once lifting his uncomfortable gimlets of eyes.

Now the notes were being compared—as chief man of action conferred with chief man of law.

"The fault is," said Captain Henderland, stooping to pick up a small piece of coal which had fallen from the grate with the official tongs (apparently obtained second-hand from Ashbucket Moll), "the little rift within the lute is that the whole thing is so pat. The coincidences are just *too* obvious. It is almost equal to a confession!"

"So much the better for us," said the fiscal—Findlayson was his name. "I'm sorry for the young fellow, but it will be a beautiful case to blood a fresh advocate depute on. He will have it all his own way right from the start."

"I am none so sure of that," said Captain Henderland, balancing the disreputable tongs on one finger as if about to do a conjuring trick with them. "No, from what I have been hearing from Molesay—I am noways so sure of that."

"And who the particular mischief *is* Molesay?" said the fiscal, who, outside his business, was distinctly limited.

The chief of police eyed him as if with an official measuring tape. He seemed to find Mr. Procurator Fiscal Findlayson much under the standard for admission to the "force."

"Not know Molesay?" he said, wonderingly. "Why, he's our police missionary. If we knew all that Molesay knows, a good many people, presently at large, would sleep to-night within the stone and lime of the Calton!"

"And why don't you make him tell?" exclaimed the fiscal. "If the man can give valuable information which would lead to the conviction of offenders, why does he not give it?"

"Because if he did, he would be of no more use," answered the chief. "I am beginning to see a lot of things I didn't when I was young. What we are doing is just repression. Molesay cures. We scotch the nettle tops. He digs out the roots. But all the same, a hint from Molesay is pure gold, and I tell

you, Mr. Findlayson, I am under considerable obligations to Molesay."

"Humph!" said the fiscal, who thought that Henderland was sometimes too sentimental. "Well?"

"Well," said Henderland, "Molesay has been all the morning with young Mackenzie, and he is assured of his innocence."

"Tut!" said the fiscal. "Let us see. The young fellow has had a deadly quarrel with his father. He has supplanted that same father in the affections of his betrothed—a fine point that, the merest duffer could hang him on it. He is caught masquerading in borrowed clothes in his father's house at midnight, when all the servants had gone to view the fire at the reformatory——"

"Right," demurred the chief, "except on one point—that is, he wasn't caught. He gave himself up at once at the nearest police station!"

"Yes," retorted the fiscal, "that was because he knew that suspicion would inevitably fall upon him. Indeed, a letter written by him has been found, which, if it does not directly threaten his father's life, at least states plainly enough that that life would not be a long one. This son alone benefits—he is sole legatee. No will is found, yet it was a probable intention on the part of his father to make a contrary one."

"But the young man had received a letter from his father quite recently, showing that friendship was re-established between them," said the chief.

"Have you seen it?" demanded the fiscal, sharply.

"No," said Captain Henderland—"no, but Molesay has!"

"We had better make this Molesay chief of police when you resign," sneered the lawyer. "He appears to know more of your business than you do yourself."

"I have got through my business for a quarter of a century," said Henderland, quietly, "mostly by keeping an open mind. But you are not so far

wrong, fiscal, after all. Molesay would make a better chief than any promoted divisional inspector, trained only in faction fights and street rows!"

"Suffers from 'open mind,' too, I suppose!" said the fiscal, grinning.

"Yes, he has a mind!" said Henderland, innocently, "He thinks with it."

"Meaning me?" retorted the fiscal. "Well, it isn't my business to think, you see; only to register facts which you find out, and collate them for you! Then—the Powers above take action or not as pleaseth them!"

"Findlayson," said the chief, "it's no use you and me bandying words. We have known each other too long. We will hold young Mackenzie—in the meantime, that is; as you say there is quite enough to justify that——"

"I should think so, indeed!" said the fiscal, promptly.

"Well—well!" said the chief, soothingly; "but you will not interfere with my discretion if I give a look elsewhere. There are a few things about the case which need clearing up. Now, for instance, the firing of the reformatory on the night of the murder——"

"That might have been the young man himself," said the fiscal; "an excellent dodge to draw off attention. He knew a man like Lord Athabasca would be sure to send off all able-bodied servants to help, and that the others would go of their own accord! Confirmatory evidence, I call it!"

"Molesay——" began the chief.

"Hang Molesay!" cried the exasperated man of law. "What Molesay said is not evidence. I suppose even a policeman knows that."

"Well, then," said the chief, imperturbably—for he knew his man, and got along very well with him on the whole—"*I* say it. This young man is no ordinary rich man's son. He has made his own

living ever since he was twenty—logging, farming, trading with Indians—his mother was one, you know, the daughter of a great fighting chief——"

"Hum—another good point," said the fiscal, making a note. "Hereditary bloodthirstiness—tell with a jury, that. Any mollycoddle could string him up. And parricide is big money, too—don't often come across such a case even in low life. I wish my nephew had been ready, but he isn't called yet!"

"Better where he is," said the chief, dryly. "If that is the line he would find himself obliged to take up! As I see things, a clever young fellow like Mackenzie would not be at such pains to provide so much evidence, all on the top of things, visible to the naked eye. Furthermore, he would not burn a reformatory, which his own money had largely built and fitted. It is plainly unthinkable."

"Hum!" said the fiscal, raising his hand toward the folios of indexed police cuttings, informations, and so forth which cumbered the shelves, "considered in the cool light of probability—before these things happened—what percentage of them would you have considered unthinkable?"

"Ah, that's true!" said the chief. "All the same—you go on with your examinations and remandings of this young fellow. There's nothing in that to prevent me from making a few inquiries on my own account, is there?"

And so the next day Captain Henderland, accompanied by Mr. Molesay in the capacity of a guide, and both in severely plain clothes, once more made their way across Maw Moss in the direction of the "Peat."

They found Mr. Carvel, exceedingly brisk, apparently very much in his element, not in the least sitting still among the ruins of Rome, but rather, in the spirit of a man who had pulled down his barns to build greater, bustling the workers about their tasks.

"Harm done?" he said. "Yes, of course, capt—

I mean *sir*" (it had been agreed that he was not to recognise the chief of metropolitan police)—"but I don't know but what, after all, it will do us good. We were settling down on the lees. Before I had got everything comfortably to my mind, and now I have to tug about and see what will do for my boys. Lost any? Well, one new boy—No. 680, name of Duffus, has disappeared—a bag egg from the training ships, I fancy. To tell the truth, I shan't be much disappointed if he does not turn up again. From what I hear, he would have been small credit to the school."

"What kind of a boy to look at?" inquired the chief. "A big, brutal boy—strong, violent?"

"Nothing of the kind," said Carvel. "Butter wouldn't melt in *his* mouth—smooth-spoken, smart, well dressed when he came here—great fellow to write, a favourite with our schoolmaster—made him a sort of monitor!"

"Ho!" said the chief. "And so this nonesuch of a pupil made off, did he, the night of the fire? Where did it originate—in that boy's dormitory, perhaps?"

"Bless you, no," said Carvel. "Happily there was no suspicion of that kind. The fire never even sniffed at the dormitories, and all the boys worked like Trojans—especially red-headed Lister and a new boy they call the Kid—whose father is, I believe, well known in the city as 'Knifer Jackson.'"

The chief turned his head quickly as a terrier when he smells out an inhabited rat hole.

"Knifer Jackson's son?" he said, quickly. "I would like to talk a bit with him. What's he in here for?"

"Egham Castle attempt," said Carvel, briefly. "But for all the Kid knew about that—why, it might have been my lad or yours! Only he is better with us than back home with his people——"

"I know—Hagman's Court, Pleasance," said Mr. Molesay, smiling. "You are right, Carvel. But if

anything should happen to his stepfather—or if we could otherwise provide for him—I think that among us we might get a remission of the rest of his sentence. I did think of sending him out with Mr. Hearne Mackenzie on his next trip. Mr. Carvel and I talked it over the last time I was out here. That's over for the present, of course. But if a chance should occur we shall expect you to do the square thing and back us up—eh, Henderland ? "

" Oh, *de*lighted ! " said Henderland. " My business is to get convictions. After that, the sooner the fellow gets off the better."

Carvel shouted at a passing warder.

" Send No. 666 to me ! "

The Kid came, wiping his curls with his Glengarry bonnet. He had been helping to fit the winter recreation room with temporary schoolroom furniture. His face was flushed, and his bright, clear eyes looked wonderingly at the three gentlemen.

" Don't look a very abandoned ruffian, does he ? " said Henderland, grimly.

" Wonderful ! " exclaimed the city missionary, " considering, that is, where he came from and the training he had had."

" Do you want to leave the reformatory, boy ? " said Henderland, quickly, keeping, as far as possible, all officialism out of his voice.

" Oh, no, sir ! " said McGhie's Kid. " I'm learning a lot here."

" Did you never learn before ? " said Henderland, in the easiest of conversational tones.

" Oh, yes," said the Kid, " at ' Blind Jacob's ' ! But that's all over—done wi'. I am learning in the joiner's shop, sir. It's wrang to break into hooses, sir."

" Very right—very right," said the chief, approvingly. " We must do something for you before long——"

" If ye please, I want to pass the fifth standard

first," said the Kid. "And noo that Mr. Grainer is sent away——"

"Hush!" exclaimed Carvel. "That has nothing to do with you, No. 666!"

The Kid stood silent, as the chief with much nonchalance took a large knife out of his pocket, opened it with a formidable click, and—fell to sharpening a pencil with it.

"Eh!" cried the startled Kid, "where did you get that? That's my faither's knife! That's Knifer Jackson's knife!"

"You are sure?"

"If it is, it will hae five nicks cut deep on the handle—they mean something or ither."

The five nicks were duly found, the one belonging to the evil doer smitten on the Whinny Knowe being yet quite fresh.

"Thank you," said the chief. "I shall not forget you, Kid."

Carvel moved his hand in the direction of the working gang, and the Kid took himself off obediently.

"And now, gentlemen," said the chief of police, impressively, as he watched the urchin's retreating back, while he held the knife all along his palm, "that clasp knife was the one found in Lord Athabasca's throat the night he was murdered!"

"Ha!" snorted Carvel, greatly startled; and then recovering himself, he added, "All the same, captain, I'll thank you not to set any more traps for *my* boys!"

. . . . .

The Kid had no idea that he had given away anything. His exclamation at the sight of his stepfather's famous knife in the possession of a stranger had been altogether instinctive, "Nark," "split," "mouther," "sawny"—he was none of these—only, he wondered what that keen-faced, kind man with the black moustache was doing with his father's knife. He had found

it, the Kid supposed. And it was a friendly warning he had given him—only that and nothing more—for no one in their senses would want to keep Knifer Jackson's property.

As the chief and Mr. Molesay went home, Captain Henderland was exceedingly pleased with himself. He called the sudden production of the clasp knife a dramatic stroke. Mr. Molesay shook his head.

"It may be," he said; "but you are going to break up one of my most promising reformations. The Knifer is no better than he should be, perhaps, though somehow I never quite believed that of him—murder in the way of business, that is. But now Mag, his wife, will go all wrong. That's certain. And if you let it out that the boy there told—why, his life wouldn't be worth twenty-four hours' purchase. If Mag does not kill him, the 'Blind Jacob's' people will do so—if only for their own sakes."

"Be easy, Molesay," said the chief. "I have a wide net, and I shan't use the Kid's evidence about the knife—that is, unless I can't help it. From the nicks in it, and the hole in the haft to put a cord through, it should be an old friend of Knifer's, and probably is well known. If you look in to-morrow, I will let you know how far I have got on."

"Well, captain," said Mr. Molesay, gently, "of course I want to get the matter of Mr. Hearne Mackenzie settled. It's a horrible thing to have a fine young fellow—with a taste for mission work—suspected of having murdered his own father. All the same, it is all up with Knifer and Mad Mag! And that's one pity!"

"And so, indeed, it deserves to be all up with Mr. Jackson," cried the chief, sharply. "We can't afford to have Mr. Police Missionary Molesay's lambs wandering about the country, putting knives into honest men's throats, while he is taking his own time converting them!"

"I daresay not," said Mr. Molesay; "but if you

reflect you will see—what I've often told you—that imprisoning, transporting, penal servitude—hanging even—does the criminal no good——"

"Stuff!" said the chief, with excusable vehemence, "great stuff! Where's your Bible with its 'Eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'?"

"Oh!" said Mr. Molesay, gently, "that was before HE came to teach us any better. That's about as much out of date as the giants that were before the flood. HE said 'Love your enemies, do good to——'"

"Hut!" cried the chief, impatiently. "Look here, Molesay, do you mean to say that you *love* Knifer Jackson and your friend Mad Mag——?"

"Yes, I do," said the little missionary, stoutly.

"And will you swear that you have hope of doing them any real good?"

"Yes, I have—I, at least, had such hopes. I've seen worse cases—more hopeless, I mean."

Now the captain was a somewhat irascible man at times. At the missionary's confession of faith he took his cloth cap off his head and threw it down in the dust of the road along which they were slowly journeying in the direction of Kingside Station.

"You are an impossible fellow, Molesay," he cried; "the Cowgate is too good for you—too calm and holy. You should be missionary down below—in a fireproof suit—among the subjects of the black gentleman with the forked tail!"

"I should like that very well," said Mr. Molesay, simply; "it's been tried before."

"How so?" queried Captain Henderland, looking up to see if the little man were not joking.

"Well," said the city missionary, "one Peter, a fisherman, who ought to have known what he was talking about, says that HE went and preached to the spirits in prison, '*which sometime had been disobedient!*' If HE could, I don't see why it should be impossible for me——".

Captain Henderland removed the little soft, green brimmed hat from the silver head, and felt Mr. Molesay's cranium all over carefully.

"Looking for the crack," he explained, smiling at his friend; "I might have known. What's the use of talking to a missionary about *my* business. You wouldn't care if three burglaries and an assassination were committed every calendar night, if only the housebreakers and assassins dropped in to see your magic lantern after!"

"Something in what you say—yes, something—I don't deny it," assented Mr. Molesay. "The dyer's hand, you know. If they look in between eight and nine and have a clean necktie on—I am only too willing to believe that—that—that the kingdom of God is within them. And that they are growing conscious of it."

"Bravo, Molesay!" cried the chief. "This has been a kind of holiday for me, up on the moorland —and with you. It's about as good as two or three days up aloft, all among the angels that lost not their first estate! Isn't that how it goes? Now I must go back to the realities of Corn Beef Joe, and the Knifer, and the three hundred and sixty-fourth conviction of your friend, Ashbucket Moll!"

"I think it is only two hundred—not three," said Molesay—"two hundred and sixty-fourth, if I mistake not!"

The chief held up his hands, and intimated that he had no further arguments to pursue with Mr. Archbold Molesay, city missionary, presently of the Cowgate.

. . . . .

But all this did not prevent Captain Henderland from spreading a wide net, and a sure, from Hagman's Close to the Water of Leith, and from the chaste portals of Torphican Street even to Leith Links. His emissaries dredged Greenside and the Lower Calton as with grappling irons. They herded the

enemies of constituted society like a flock of sheep. They encountered them away out on the roads, as far as the Ferries and Linlithgow on the one hand, and unto Cockmuir and "the Crook" on the other. Corn Beef Joe was trapped drinking in a house of call near Portobello, and taken after a wild attempt to swim Lochend Loch, as he affirmed, "to catch a passing steamer"—which would have been a long swim, indeed, and much of it on dry land.

The Knifer, who knew a few things, never attempted to get away at all, but was taken, along with his wife Mag, sitting in his own hired house in Hagman's Close.

"Blind Jacob's," its locality revealed by a frightened pupil, was captured with all its scholastic furniture, the same that can be viewed unto this day in the famous museum of crime at the chief's offices in Edinburgh. The scatterment after the building of Babel, that very ancient city and tower, was a little local Mesopotamian circumstance compared to this.

Only the Cowgate remained partially exempt, owing to special conditions—the chief of which were, perhaps, Billy Earsman and Mr. Molesay.

The chief went to bed that night with a happy heart. He felt at last that all the strings were in his hand. In the meantime he kept the Knifer's weapon of doom in a special drawer in the office safe, and—said nothing about it.

The echoes of the great "poliss" raid filled all the entrances of the B. I. P.—"jug and bottle"—as well as "public," with a confused murmur. Outwardly Ogg mourned, but in private he rejoiced exceedingly.

"A good riddance," he said. "They bring in little money, and give the place a bad name. I'd rather see a dozen thirsty Gilmerton carters, or a string o' Bertam's foundry lads up frae the Walk, than all the 'fly coves' let loose frae Perth Penitentiary!"

Ogg, king of Bashan, had spoken; there was no appeal.

But Mr. Molesay, in spite of several Delphic utterances, designed to put his most promising frequenters on their guard, had to mourn thinly attended meetings and sundry gaps in his carefully kept pocket-book lists. He explained the matter, however, and drew his moral clear.

"My friends," he said, the silver-gray head under the flaring gas jet appearing as if crowned with an aureole, "I cannot preach to you—I never do. Perhaps that is why so many of you come here month after month. You never get tired of my sermons. What I have got to say to-night is plain. We have lost some well-known faces from among us. We mourn a few vacant chairs. We believe they will soon be back again. We feel sure that they are innocent. They have stopped wrong-doing. *That* can be done in a moment, like a clapping of hands, but it takes a long while to re-establish character. And our friends have been" (he was going to say "lagged") "—ahem—separated from us because of their past. And the motto is, my friends, 'What thou doest, do quickly!' Do it now! In Christ's name, put on the new man. Reform—so that there will be plenty of time to work up a new character—perhaps not so fine as the lord provost's, but at least as good as an average town councillor's! Amen. Let us sing, 'Jerusalem the Golden.' Number 464."

CHAPTER XXII

THE BITTERNESS OF DEATH IS OVERPAST

THE final examination of Hearne Mackenzie before the sheriff resulted, in spite of all preconception and misconception, in the dispersion of the clouds of suspicion. Sheriff Peebles was in a better humour. He had just returned from his holiday, and felt revived after the fatigues and annoyances consequent upon the bringing into the world of his eighth child—a fine boy. He was now, on the whole, rather pleased with the achievement. And if his wife was going about the house like a ghost, pale and thin, why—she was always like that, more or less. Sheriff Peebles had never seen such a woman for complaining. Why, the other night, when he had come home from his club—a little late, it is true—if she had not taken it upon herself to faint, and he had to go in search of the doctor—a very hard thing for a man in his position, with his work to do the next day!

Oh, this Hearne Mackenzie—a dreadful thing! Sheriff Peebles held up his hands at the thought. He had known the murdered father well—had even shaken hands with him as many as three times at public meetings. And to think that his son—his only son, too!

And again Sheriff Peebles held up his hands.

"I suppose there is nothing for it, Mr. Findlayson," he said; "we must commit him? It is a clear case, as it seems to me."

The procurator fiscal shook his head, perhaps a little reluctantly. Once he had thought the same.

"It did seem so at first," he said, "and to me the evidence seemed very positive, but it appears that Captain Henderland has discovered the owner of the knife. And, on reviewing the whole matter with him, and in the light of the new information which Henderland has laid before me, I—I am bound to say that there is nothing improbable in the tale of the young man. He tells it plainly. I think you had better hear him again."

"Well, if you think it necessary," lamented Sheriff Peebles. "You will, however, kindly remember that I have not quite recovered from the severe shock I had some time ago, Findlayson. I am a sick man, sir!"

"I will remember, sheriff!" said the fiscal, with extreme aridity.

Hearne Mackenzie was brought in for examination, and the fiscal addressed him.

"Sir," he said, "I own that at first I was exceedingly prejudiced against you—as any man must have been who believed you guilty, or even accessory to the fact. But matters have taken a turn in your favour—I don't mind saying—to my extreme surprise. And, for myself, I am inclined to believe your story. I have told the sheriff so. Now, will you be good enough to repeat what you told us formerly, as briefly as possible? I can promise you that we will be inclined to hear it very differently."

Hearne bowed slightly. He had lost something of his out-of-door look by his confinement in the Calton, but he stood up as self-contained and erect as ever.

"I was staying on at the Inn of Kingside, after having given in my resignation at the reformatory," he said. "My father had found a letter which I had addressed to—a young lady whom he proposed to marry. He quarrelled with me on that account. I do not blame him, though I think that somehow he must have misread what I wrote——"

"I have the document under my hand," said the fiscal. "Tell me how you think your father may have misread the letter you wrote to—the lady."

It was a copy which was handed to Hearne.

He read it carefully, and his face flushed.

"Yes," he said, "I did write part of that letter to Miss Patricia McGhie, then staying with her uncle at Egham Castle. In my opinion it is every man for himself in such matters, and I don't—I did not, that is—recognise that my father had any right to come between me and the only woman I ever loved. My father would have treated me just the same. It was our habit, as between man and man. But" (he added with increasing emphasis), "though I wrote the letter down to 'ever as now, your friend and lover,' the rest I never wrote, and know nothing of. It has obviously been added to anger my father. The original cannot be in my handwriting."

The sheriff made a motion with his head, and the fiscal, going round the table, put the original, found in Lord Athabasca's strong box, before the young man's eyes.

Hearne was manifestly perplexed. He examined the crushed letter closely.

"It is certainly very like—marvellously so, indeed," he said; "but all the same I never wrote the last sentences of the letter, which are quite out of keeping with the rest. They are not the composition of an educated man. They are rude and insolent, and indeed obvious additions to the true letter, which ends plainly enough at the place specified. The rest is clumsy enough as a forgery—all but the writing, which is certainly wonderfully like my own!"

"Read the sentences which you assert are not yours," said the sheriff.

"My father cannot last long," read the fiscal, who had drawn back the original letter. "I am heir to all that he possesses. You might do worse than go off to some snug hiding place such as we know of till

the storm blows over. Then you may have the money, the peerage, and your sweetheart, too."

"I never wrote these words—the suggestion is abominable—inconceivable—both as to my father and in what concerns the lady. It would have been impossible for me to have written them."

"That," said the sheriff, sententiously, "is a matter of opinion. At least the forgery took in your father, who might have been expected to know you best. He thought the words were yours!"

"He was, not unnaturally, very angry," said Hearne. "I do not say he had no cause. But—he made no effort to alter his intentions with regard to me as his son!"

"But," objected Sheriff Peebles, "in effect, the affair did work out so. This letter was written before the flight of the young lady, and she *did* conceal herself in a hiding place known to you both!"

"I beg your pardon!" said Hearne, clearly and icily. "The part of the letter which *I* wrote is certainly prior in date to Miss Patricia McGhie's flight from Egham Castle on the morning of February 25th; but the additions were no doubt made immediately before the letter was sent to my father."

"Can you suggest any clue as to who could have had a motive for injuring you, or the necessary skill to make such extensive alterations? Had you any enemies at the reformatory?"

"Not that I know of," said Hearne, slowly, "unless—unless" (he spoke with reluctance), "yes, there was a schoolmaster of the name of Grainer—since dismissed—who resented my being there in a salaried position. But I should have thought him quite incapable of the forgery, so far as the caligraphy was concerned. He wrote like—well, like a learned pig!"

The fiscal made a note to tell this to Henderland, who had an extraordinary faculty for putting two and two together.

"And now," continued the sheriff, "give us a clear account of your actions on the night of the burning of the reformatory, and of the finding of your father."

As clearly as if he had been giving a lesson in the "Hearne Mackenzie," the young man stated his case —the wetting on the moor, the borrowing of the landlord's clothes, the early going to bed, the awakening with the dancing red lights in his chamber lustre—the idea of the fire engine at Three Ridings, the single candle he had seen passing athwart the rooms on the first floor of the silent house as he approached, and, lastly, in a voice that trembled a little, he gave the account of what he had found waiting for him there, and of his hurried summons of Inspector McKay.

"I am bound to say," remarked the fiscal, with a certain reluctant courage, "that all which you have advanced on your own behalf shows a disposition to affirm itself by other evidence."

He turned to the sheriff:

"I do not think that I can advise you to commit this gentleman. And I think we cannot do better than set him at liberty—provisionally, that is—advising him for his own sake to be ready to appear at any time, and give what evidence may best assist the course of justice."

"Your lordship is at liberty!" said Sheriff Peebles, who loved dignities, especially of the hereditary sort. He had been a convinced Tory ever since he had once had the honour of lunching with an earl. "I regret very much that you should have been put to so much trouble; but the course of justice, like that of true love, does not always run smooth."

Hearne only bowed gravely, without answering.

"I am sorry," continued Sheriff Peebles, amicably, "that in the present difficult domestic circumstances of my household I cannot offer you the hospitality of a friend of your lamented father; but if your lordship will dine with me at my club—they have quite good

bedrooms there—and—my introduction would be sufficient. They know me at 'The Bench and Bar'!"

"I thank you," said the grave grandson of Chief Crowfoot, "but I have friends in the city whom it is my duty to relieve from anxiety as soon as possible."

He bowed again, and went forth into the keen northerly air of that early summer time a free man.

The fiscal and the sheriff looked at each other steadily a moment, and then they smiled.

"He is going to her!" said the fiscal, and rubbed his hands. He, too, had once been young, and besides he was pleased with Hearne for snubbing the sheriff.

"Hum!" said the latter, gathering up all his belongings and wrapping his throat up carefully, "after they have been married twelve years and have eight or nine children, he won't be in such a hurry! *I* am going to my club!"

. . . . .

As a matter of fact and history the men of law were right. Hearne Mackenzie did go straight to Mr. Molesay. In some uncertainty he threaded the unfamiliar mazes which lead down to the Cowgate. In the Vennel the name of Mr. Molesay was still unknown. The Grass Market had heard of him vaguely—but as one altogether given up to devious courses and the favouring of the hated Cowgate.

He turned down a short gray-black street with clammy pavements. A rare policeman regarded him with the jealous eye of suspicion, from which he was only delivered when he found himself in front of the many attractions of Ogg, king of Bashan's Imperial Palace. Billy Earsman presided behind the beer-pulls, his chest well out, his arms bare, white-aproned, and with the pride of unbroken success in his eye. His look said, "Sirs and burgesses of this lower city, every man is at liberty to remain here so long as he pays his drinks and behaves himself. If not, by these brawny arms, I, Billy Earsman, will have the

greatest pleasure in pitching him out on the pavement!"

"Mr. Molesay—*do* I know him?" shouted Billy Earsman, flinging back his head, "*do* I know the B. I. P.? *Do* I know Magdalen's Chapel? Do I know the Sooth Back? Perhaps not! *But* I know Mr. Molesay. Everybody—man, woman, *and* child in the Cowgate knows Mr. Molesay. And if you are a rent collector, or a blessed shark of any kind come to bother him about money—for his mission hall feu duty or what not" (Billy buckled up the rolls of white shirt sleeve tighter) "ye will not get far along this illustrious thoroughfare! No, ye will find the dispensary convenient!"

Smiling, Hearne informed Billy that he cherished no ill intentions, that in good truth he was infinitely indebted to the city missionary, and that he had come to ask another favour of him.

"Indebted to him—I bet ye are—I just bet ye have been!" cried Billy, instantly appeased, "and what's mair—if it is the coat and waistcoat he has on to his back this blessed minute, ye hae come to seek, ye will get them. He's no fit to live, that man. He's juist gane by to see Blin' Fiddler Helm's wife—that is a thankless madam, and tak's the lend o' a saint, if ever there was a saint i' this world. He'll be back in ten minutes. Ye can bide by that window, and I will tell you when I hear his wee bits o' boot heels come *clickety-clack* on the paving stones! For he aye keeps the middle of the road, so as to be able to shake hands wi' onybody on either side."

It was perhaps rather more than ten minutes that Hearne had to wait before the aforementioned tap-tapping on the pavement announced the return of Mr. Molesay. Billy stepped to the door to see fair play. Hearne had ordered no liquor for the "good of the house," and this impressed Billy with the idea that he was either a very bad sort indeed—sheriff's officer, perhaps—or one of what Billy called "his

own kind "—meaning thereby, "Mr. Molesay's mission folk."

At the sight of Hearne, standing right in the fairway, the little city missionary stopped troubled. He was thinking of the interview in the police cells. So agitated was he, that Billy, deciding that Hearne was a sheriff's officer after all, advanced truculently with his elbows in the position of combat. For several seconds Hearne's head was in considerable danger of punching, but the next moment Mr. Molesay held out his hand, and said a little wistfully, "You have been discharged—you have come to find Miss Patricia?"

Hearne smiled with his usual grave sweetness.

"It does not take a prophet to foretell that," he said, "and—*you know!*"

"Yes," said the little city missionary, with his eyes on the black, gletty paving stones, "I know!"

Then he recovered himself somewhat, looked shyly up at Hearne, even with a kind of shamefacedness, and said, "Come with me!"

Billy, still standing on the pavement, now began to look wistful in his turn.

"Good day, Billy," said Mr. Molesay, somewhat mournfully.

Billy marked the sadness, and his great hairy arms angled themselves a little more militantly.

"Sure you don't want me?" he cried, his suspicions now thoroughly aroused. "I'll 'knock' that fellow with pleasure if he has come after anything—anything you don't want him to have!"

Billy followed a few steps, menacing, hopeful.

Mr. Molesay sighed and shook his head, smiling a little.

"Nothing that you can help me with, Billy," said Mr. Molesay. "Why this gentleman is a lord—a real lord!"

"I doan't care if he was the only one there was!" said Billy. "If he came to Cowgate to annoy you,

sir, I'd knock his head into a lump of putty in five minutes ! "

" Thank you, Billy—I shall remember," said the missionary, " but he only wants to . . . to . . . (something made a difficulty in his throat) take away from us something that we can't—can't—hope to keep in the Cowgate ! "

" Well," said Billy, with hope not yet quite dead in his eye, " if you don't want him to have it—no more he shan't. I would do six months for him, rather, pleased and proud ! "

" Thank you, no ! " said the missionary, hastily, seeing that Billy's evident intentions with regard to Hearne's figurehead were stirring the Cowgaters with the hope of a fight (chiefest of all recreations). " This is Mr. Hearne, son of the late Lord Athabasca, who has come asking for Miss Patricia. Your wife, Kate, will tell you the rest."

Billy's muscular arms dropped to his side.

" Then there is to be no punching, sir," he said. And turning to Hearne he added, " I always upheld that you didn't do it ! I have five quid on your getting off, even money."

" It's wicked to bet, Billy," said the city missionary, " and after what you have promised me, too ! But if it's a comfort to you, you have won your money. Mr. Hearne had no more to do with it than I had—less indeed, I do believe. For it was I who advised Miss Patricia to run away, which was the beginning of everything. If it hadn't been for that, poor Lord Athabasca would have been safe and sound—a thousand miles away on his honeymoon ! "

For the first time the stoic face of Chief Crowfoot's grandson twitched.

" Never," he said, hastily, " you may make yourself easy, Mr. Molesay—she never would have married my father. She told me so herself ! "

Billy's nod expressed approval.

" Ay," he said, " and that's true ! My wife, Kate,

knew it from the beginning. Your mind may keep itself easy, sir!"

"Thank you, Billy," said Mr. Molesay, turning abruptly on his heel. "Now we are going to call on Mrs. Rodgers."

But all the same he did not seem very grateful.

Billy watched them out of sight, his huge hands thrust under his white apron and rolled up like a big double bar of soap. "The little 'un's got something on his mind. He don't like what the big long one has come for. It *can't* be that—no, it's plumb impossible. And yet—I don't know——! Rum things are men and women, after all!"

"Anyway," he concluded as he wended his way thoughtfully back to the B. I. P., "I shall ask Kate about it. And ANYWAY, it was a pity that I didn't get a chance to knock that big brown-faced chap's head off—ANYWAY!"

CHAPTER XXIII

"OH, DEM GOLDEN SLIPPERS!"

Not yet was Billy Earsman a complete and seasoned convert to the gospel of peace. And upon occasion his hands were extremely ready to thrash the mountains, and very convincingly to argue with any sons of Belial who should venture to molest *his* city missionary. As yet, however, his virtues were mostly of the Old Testament sort.

Mrs. Rodgers, after shaking hands with Hearne, went quickly out, and called Mr. Molesay to admire her canary, which was the pride of the Cowgate and then in full orange plumage.

"I don't believe," she said, "that you could have managed to get out of that room except for me. How stupid you men are! It is past believing. Now there's Harry——"

And Mr. Molesay spent a quarter of an hour over the latest iniquities of the minister of the Peden Memorial—how he forgot his tall hat in a day school, and had it brought back by a hundred and fifty of the senior pupils, who scrambled for enough of the brim to hold a finger and thumb upon, and gave three cheers afterwards on the pavement in front of the manse, continuing so to do at intervals till moved on by the police. *Item*, how he always lost an umbrella every day he went out walking with one, and how at last she got his parishioners to bring them back by painting in large red letters on the inside between each rib, "Stolen from the Rev. Harry Rodgers, Cowgate."

"It takes time," she explained, "but it is an object lesson that honesty, in the matter of a 3*s.* 11*d.* umbrella, is the best policy! It is worth two dozen of Harry's sermons, any day!"

Meanwhile in the minister's study, where first, amid rows of patristic fathers and grim Puritans in gigantic folio, we made the acquaintance of the pastor of the Peden Memorial, Hearne and Patricia met.

They could only clasp hands and look into each other's eyes. No more was needed. For the bitterness of death was past. The Marah taste had gone from the fountain. The waters had run sweet and, save for the memory of the father yet unavenged, life had grown natural. Patricia was the old Patricia again. This was by no means the hour of her weakness.

"I will kiss you once, Hearne; yes, once," she said; "and after that, we will hold a council of war. Note well, all this has to be cleared up. We are responsible for that boy—McGhie's Kid, who recognised his stepfather's knife—it really turned on that. Mr. Molesay knows him. He is a good boy, and we must get him with nice people. We must educate him, you and I, Hearne. I've been thinking of it. It will take some time to get him off, but I've been to the provost and to the chief of police. The sheriff is an old lump of butter who takes any shape, according as you pat him. I'll pat him to rights—I have not been at the business twenty years for nothing."

"I dare say we can manage it," said Hearne, soberly. "I am going back to the reformatory to-morrow!"

"You are going to-day," cried Pat, sharply. "I am not going to have you hanging about here, with Mrs. Rodgers running to get her husband and the maid out of the way, lest they should catch us kissing behind the hall door, like an under-cook and the butcher's boy. No, thank you! When I want you, I'll send for you. So, remember! I'll tell you what

you are to do. Thank Heaven, there's the penny post, and I won't stint you in stamps!"

"I should like one now," said Hearne, humbly, "just to seal the bargain!"

"Not another," said Patricia, determinedly. "Stamps, indeed. I thought you were old enough to know better. I am not Marthe or Baby Lant, who would mark down such things in a notebook——"

"But the other day," began Hearne, tentatively and in all humility.

"What other day?" demanded Pat, fiercely.

"The day you came to the cell at Ravensnuik to see me!" said Hearne, with a man's invincible stupidity, "you gave me——"

"Well, and if I did," cried Patricia, "it was only because I was sorry for you. And—and—oh, that I should have to say it!—because I wanted you to know that there was somebody who believed in you—who came straight to you, who loved you! There—you—you *Man!*"

"Thank you, Patricia," said Hearne, brokenly. "I *am* an ass!"

"As I remarked, you are a *Man!*" retorted Pat McGhie. "There is nothing stronger to be said! Now, not a word more about it. I can't stop here all day with Mrs. Rodgers thinking us clasped in each other's arms, and the maid of all work tacking round the passages trying to get a chance at the keyhole. I won't have it, so there! You understand?"

Hearne well understood—however sincerely he might have regretted—that Patricia was not as her sisters in such matters of the heart. Pat followed his reasoning.

"It's no use," she said; "I'm not built to love-make for its own sake. If that's what you want, off with you to Baby Lant, who will sit and purr in an arm-chair all day, and listen to you talking to her about her eyes. Once in a while, I don't mind—as it were, on the way to what we mean to be together, you and

I, Hearne! I can take such things flying, as a bird on the wing picks a grain of wheat from the ground. But to waste a day philandering—I won't—for you or any man! I don't care whether my eyes are gray or green or blue or tricolour! I am not proud of my profile. The shape of my nose doesn't interest me in the least, so long as I have a pocket handkerchief to blow it with when I have a cold. My mouth, in spite of my silliness in the police cell, was made for eating with. Yes, Mr. Hearne, it was—and I'll thank you to bear the fact in mind. If you don't agree to this, off to Baby Lant with you. She is far prettier than I am, anyway, and I have always told you so."

Three minutes after these words were spoken, the door was pushed open and Baby Lant appeared. She had come down the passage with the cry of "Where's my sister—I want my sister!"

Baby Lant stood stock still, her blue eyes big like saucers.

Her sister was kissing the dark young man whom she had once seen at Egham Castle—or t'other way about. Affairs were too mixed to be sure. Besides, she was excited.

"Why, Pat!" she cried. "How dare you not tell me? You must be engaged! You were letting him kiss you—you were kissing him yourself. And —I declare you are crying!"

. . . . .

After this, alarms and excursions. Exit Hearne without formal adieux.

"And you bade him go back to his old reformatory," cried Baby Lant, after the first expansions of sisterly affection. "You did—after—what I saw?"

"I was . . . only telling him . . . not to!"

"I dare say!" said Baby Lant, dryly. "It looked like that! No wonder he was discouraged, poor fellow! You should not have been so hard with him, Pat."

"Well, at any rate," said Patricia, "I made him go away—till it should be satisfactorily proved who had killed his father."

"Well, I wouldn't," said Baby Lant; "not for packs of fathers—living ones—much less if they were dead!"

"Baby Lant, you should not speak like that!"

Baby Lant clapped her hands.

"I knew it would come—I was sure of it!" she cried. "Whenever a girl is married, like Marthe. Or even engaged, like you——"

"Who said I was engaged?" demanded Patricia, haughtily, turning her nose horizontal.

"Well, if you are not, you ought to be," said Baby Lant, with some candour. "Don't preach to me any more, madam. Marthe ladles it out to me by the hour about my behaviour. And yet she will take off a new white glove so as to walk home with her hand in Willie's pocket—yes, and she makes him take off his mitten, too. Oh, and she makes him wear knitted wristbands—'*muffatees*,' as you remember they call them in Kirkmessan! And you, Pat, are going to be just as bad! Only I won't stand it from you, Pat. I know too much of your *ba-a-a-ad* past. I'll cast it up to you, if you talk to me like a grandmother—worse, I'll peach to *him!* Are you listening?"

"All that has nothing to do with the matter, Baby Lant," said Patricia, with the grave ease which all unconsciously she was quickly catching from her lover. "I told him that I would never marry him till it was proved who killed his father."

"Nonsense," said Baby Lant. "What does it matter?—he didn't do it, at any rate."

"Well, he was suspected," said Patricia. "And

he owes it to his father's memory to find out his murderer. In any case, I'm not asking you, Baby Lant. I'm *telling* you—as I told him."

"He seemed to like it," said Baby Lant, sneeringly. "Curious, that!"

"You see," said Patricia, without heeding Baby Lant's flippancies, "Hearne and his father were really much more to each other than one reared in this old country would have supposed. He loved his father, though he had always supported himself since before he went to college. Then afterwards he wintered in logging camps, went mining, all on his own——"

"Hook, say 'hook,' Pat, oh, do!" cried Baby Lant. "It will sound more like old times—before you knew this wonderful paragon of filial devotion and correct English! When you used to balance yourself on two chair backs with your heels on the mantelpiece!"

"I never did!" cried Patricia. "Baby Lant, where do you expect to go to—telling such lies?"

"Why, to Canada," answered Baby Lant, promptly. "I shall expect to go there the first winter after you are married. They say girls have rather a good time there, and I shan't ever let on that I can skate the least bit. Instead, I shall pick out the *very* nicest man there is to teach me how! *Oooooooo-oop!*" Baby Lant sucked the air crescendo-wise through the prettiest pair of lips, "walled" her eyes reverently as one who sees a vision, and then descended to earth again with the reflection, "That *will* be ripping!"

"You'll have to behave very much better," said Pat, gravely, "or we won't have you—my husband and I."

Baby Lant folded her hands worshipfully, and intoned solemnly after her sister, "'*My husband and I!*' Oh, rare Ben Jonson!" she cried. "Who would have thought it? Hath it come to this, '*My husband and I*'!"

It will be observed that, however unable, even with the advantage of her new dignities to restrain the eccentricities of Baby Lant, Patricia had power and to spare, in that which concerned Hearne Mackenzie. The young man punctually obeyed her will, and presented himself next morning at the "Peat" by the first train. He found Carvel busy with his reparations, humming like a bee and—though his face fell at the sight of the young man's black strip of crape about his arm, he had the good taste not to speak of his recent brief imprisonment.

"Hey, glad to see you—glad to see you," he cried, before they could shake hands. "Come to take hold, eh? Two posts vacant—you can have either! Schoolmaster and assistant superintendent—you can take your choice. Or, for your father's sake, I will step down and you shall be superintendent and I assistant! What say you? We are poor, these days. And I don't expect to touch much stipend for a year or two. So it will matter the less!"

Thus Carvel, and Hearne, clasping his friend's hand in his strong grip, answered, "Thank you, superintendent! But I am now a volunteer. I came to carry out what I am sure would have been my father's last wish, had time been given him to express it. I will rebuild the burned portions of the reformatory as a memorial to Lord Athabasca, and—you can draw your own plans!"

Now joy affects strong men more than grief. They are better prepared against one than for the other. They hold themselves together, too proud to show emotion. We have seen how Carvel took the attacks of Schoolmaster Simeon Grainer. But at Hearne's words, and at the certainty that all his poor makeshifts were unnecessary, he suddenly sobbed out with that quick, gulping throat catch, like the warning of an old-fashioned eight-day clock before it strikes.

"Man—man!" he said. "After all you have done for us!"

"All the more reason," said Hearne. "My father and I did not agree about many things, but we were quite at one upon the subject of the 'Peat.'"

In another moment Carvel had his notebook out, and was drawing diagrams.

"The schoolroom will come so," he said, cocking his head to the side admiringly; "and I've long thought of having the dining room at the other side, quite separate, with a covered passage, you know. The boys would be the better of a walk—sort of grace before meat! And a swimming bath——?"

He looked anxiously at Hearne, with a question in the clear, piercing eyes of the born enthusiast. Carvel was anything but calm now.

"Most certainly a swimming bath!" smiled Hearne, who also was not a little excited.

"And a little reading-room for the boys to sit in in the evenings—nicely ventilated?"

"Oh, of course, a reading room!" assented Hearne.

"With a small library?"

"*With* a library," smiled Hearne, watching the sparkle in the superintendent's eyes.

"Books that the boys will really read," said Carvel, as if to himself. "Not dull books in moral covers?"

"Yes, yes," said Hearne, thinking of Patricia. "I know who will see after that—good stuff, of course, but well sugar-coated!'

"*Glory-hallelooo!*" cried the erstwhile quiet Carvel. And leaping up from the pile of roofing timber on which he had been sitting, he danced a breakdown in full view of his not very astonished boys, shuffling his old down-at-heel work-a-day "slops" of green carpeting briskly to the tune of

> "Oh, dem golden slippers—oh, dem golden slippers,
> Golden slippers I'm goin' to wear,
> To walk on dem golden streets!"

Then he thrust his hand through Hearne's arm and led him off "to see his new system of sanitation,

perfect as human skill can make it, my dear fellow—dear to my heart as my good old lady herself—almost," he cried; "and I'm going to pay for it out of my own pocket as an extra—yes, I am!"

For when anyone abused Carvel he smiled and shrugged his shoulders. But if anyone abused his precious reformatory, or ventured to hint that the boys therein were not predestined cabinet ministers and manifest saints of the calendar—then woe betide that man!

CHAPTER XXIV

"CAN A MOTHER FORGET?"

THE Knifer was tried for his crime—tried, found guilty, and sentenced. He had certainly been at Three Ridings, with two companions, on the night of the burning. So much was proven. They had known beforehand that the house would most likely be empty or almost empty that night. Suspicion lighted naturally on a certain Duffus, not in custody. But the Knifer, when asked at his private examination as to his comrades only replied, "That is for you to find out!" And so held his tongue.

At one time during the trial it seemed that the Knifer must get off after all, and there were frequent consultations between the fiscal, the crown lawyers, and a quiet, dark man whom we have previously introduced into this history as Captain Henderland, chief of metropolitan police. Three times the lawyers had put a private question to him, and three times the dark man had shaken his head.

"Not unless it cannot possibly be avoided!" he said.

And again the points which told against the Knifer were laboured—his silence, his admission that he was in and about the house of Three Ridings with other companions, at least three in number, for the purpose of committing theft. Indeed, the burglars had collected numerous valuables for the purpose of carrying them off, and had been engaged upon Lord Athabasca's strong box—a recent type strongly built into the

wall—when they had been disturbed, apparently by the arrival of the son of the murdered man, Mr. Hearne Mackenzie—who was now complimented on the clearness and conciseness with which he gave his evidence. The days of Sheriff Peebles were already far off in a dim obscurity.

"*Call Alexander McGhie!*"

At the back of the justiciary chamber a woman cried out suddenly. Macers moved in her direction in a dignified and leisurely manner. But instantly she was silent again. The red judge looked her way once, and with a slight cough the Knifer settled himself more doggedly to wait the issue.

Then the Kid came in, still in his reformatory Sunday suit, with the close-fitting cuffs and the red knitted "comforter" about his neck. His clean-cut features and bright face took and held the eyes of all.

"You are this man's son?" asked the crown advocate, a dapper little man with a convenient stammer, which could be accentuated when he wanted a laugh, or would disappear altogether at the serious passages.

"He married my mither!" said the Kid, simply.

"And who, then, was your father?"

"He was David McGhie, of Back Mill Lands, at Kirkmessan," answered the boy.

"Do you mean to say that he was a landed proprietor?" demanded the advocate depute, forgetting his stammer, and raising his large, very round glasses level with the blunt beak of his wig. They were made long legged on purpose, so that he could fix a witness at a distance.

"He was the chief of the Clan McGhie," said the Kid, simply. "Now—I'm IT!"

At this a laugh went about the court. But Bitter Little Airchie Craw, the Kirkmessan lawyer, who was in Edinburgh on business connected with a will, and liked attending the justiciary courts (for practice in evil speaking), passed a paper up to the crown

agent, to whom he was well known, having formerly spent some time in the same office.

"*The boy tells the truth. He is really 'The McGhie,' and the chief of the clan. A. Craw, Kirkmessan.*"

The city lawyer looked over his shoulder and saw the little wizened apple of Bitter Airchie's face, nodding at him with pleasurable malice in every wrinkle. He knew Bitter Airchie's capacities as a genealogist. He was also aware that he did not tell lies. So he passed the document up to the advocate depute, who was still on his feet, with the scribbled memorandum "that after all there seemed to be something in what the boy said."

"Ah!" said the advocate, stammering now very much indeed, "so you are a chief, and a holder of property—at least your father was?"

"It never did me ony guid—bein' a chief," said the Kid; "and as for the property, I think the lawyers got it!"

Which again in its turn raised a laugh.

Suddenly the Knifer's weapon was handed up to the Kid by an officer of the court.

"You have already, I think, recognised that weapon?" suggested the lawyer.

The boy hesitated and looked appealingly about, as if to ask counsel from some one.

"Come now—no hedging, no hesitation—yes or no!"

Still the Kid stood silent. The Knifer had been good to him and——

"Come," said the lawyer, "out with it. You told Captain Henderland, chief of police, and Mr. Molesay, city missionary, that the knife now before you belonged to the prisoner, the man called Knifer Jackson. You even mentioned the number of nicks or marks cut on the bone handle! This you cannot deny!"

The Kid looked at the prisoner, who nodded and smiled, as if to say, "Tell the truth and shame the devil!"

What he really meant to say was that the game was up.

"It is his knife," faltered the Kid, his eyes filling with tears, as he thought of the trap into which he had fallen.

"Whose knife?" The question of the lawyer cut sharply now, without a suspicion of stammer in his voice.

"*His!*" said the Kid, pointing to his stepfather.

The woman's scream rose again, ending in loud imprecations.

"If he were ten times my son, I would kill him for that!" cried the voice.

There was a little swift disturbance at the back of the court, and Mad Mag—haggard, furious, muttering vague threats—was led out through green baize doors that swung on their well-accustomed hinges, to confront with her tangled locks and blazing eyes that curious apathy of the hangers-on about the doors of every court where a man is on trial for his life.

After that the advocate depute, having made the point, sat down with a confident sigh, and though the Knifer's advocate, in his young enthusiasm, touched all the strings of abuse to shake the Kid's evidence—reformatory boy, ingrate, revengeful, and so forth—the Kid's obvious reluctance, his piteous look about the court, and perhaps most of all the prisoner's nodded acquiescence in the recognition of the knife with which the deed had been committed, decided the jury.

Guilty, then, and the black cap—an old cocked hat, smuggled in under the judge's cloak to be in readiness! It had remained hidden under the bench till the red judge began the highly affecting speech in which the Knifer was informed that on a certain

not distant morning he should hang by the neck till he was dead.

To this the Knifer listened in silence. He had nothing to say. He shook hands with the advocate who had defended him, even though he had smiled a little at many of his boyish outbursts on behalf of his client. But, as he left the court in charge of the police, he called out certain words which were not intended for the red judge, nor for the gowned advocates, nor yet for the respectable curious in the galleries.

"The Kid is not to be marked," he said. "He could do no other!"

This was for the scattered members of "Blind Jacob's." Knifer was protecting the Kid from its vengeance to the best of his ability. But of course the most dangerous of all did not hear him, and would not have cared if she had.

Mad Mag believed that her son had "sold" her husband to death.

. . . . .

On the whole, there was a great solid middle-class contentment throughout the city when the case was over. The law folk were happy. It had been a neat, clean-lined case. The advocate depute had not jested too much, but had nipped in with the Kid's evidence at the proper moment. Though a little boyishly eager, the counsel for the defence had done very well. There was stuff in him.

Even "Blind Jacob's" was satisfied. The Knifer had behaved like a man and a true "sport." There never was any doubt about the Knifer, but still it was a comfort to find a man, in such utter straits, acting well up to his reputation, taking and asking no favours. He had not blustered. He had not spouted. He had not shown off in any way, and his final appeal that the Kid might not be held responsible roused a kindly smile.

"He always *was* soft about that dratted Kid," growled Corn Beef Joe. "I never seen anything extra about the loon myself—a regular potted head of a Kid—young Duffus was worth twenty of him!"

And so the Knifer, with the prospect before him of making a fitting end, found even his amiable weaknesses arise to call him blessed. So be it with us all!

And the good folk of the city, pulling on their nightcaps, and trying to remember if they had hasped all the windows and barred the doors, sighed comfortably and said, as they turned in, "Well, it's a good thing that fellow is laid by the heels—that's one less, at any rate!"

And in his exceedingly sanitary condemned cell, the Knifer composed himself to sleep, with the philosophic reflection that it was sure to come to this in the long run.

As for Mr. Archbold Molesay, a great sadness overpowered him. In his time he had drafted a great many "lost sheep" into his flock. But on the whole the Knifer was the most entirely lost of any he knew—and yet, somehow, he had not despaired even of the Knifer. He betook himself up to Calton, where he was informed that the lately condemned was asleep. So he came away disconsolate, and wandered up and down the Portobello Road till the dawning.

Archbold Molesay was the sort of man who would never have been long happy in heaven. He would certainly have asked his way down to the portal of hell, and if refused admission there, he would have wandered about, even as now, wanting to get in, to see if, perchance, "he might do them any good."

Consequently he was the man to whom a woman, pale, dishevelled, half-clad, bareheaded, and wholly dazed, suddenly appeared and propounded a question.

"Is this the road to the 'Peat' Reformatory for laddies?" She had asked him because he did

not look like a policeman, and then, suddenly recognising Mr. Molesay, she struck at the hand which tried to detain her, and fled precipitately down the dark, winding path back again into the city. But Mr. Molesay remembered the scene in the court that day and was advised. But even then he had no idea of the terrible concreteness of Mad Mag's intentions with regard to her son. He thought only that Mag was again on the spree. There had never been much to hope for from Mag—indeed, apart from the Knifer, nothing.

The silver-headed little man with the weak heart, who had to stop several times before he got to the seventh floor of a "land," had not been asleep for well-nigh thirty hours, but he had no thought of his own needs now. He forgot all about breakfast though he could smell "kippers" in the very air of the narrow Cowgate. He betook him to the neat first-floor dwelling of Kate and Billy Earsman. Billy had his head and the upper part of his person in a tub, and at the sound of the opening door he arose, extremely soapsudsy. Then he danced round, demanding a towel to take that three-times blesséd soap out of his eyes. When his laughing wife could recover herself enough to hand it to him, he scrubbed so furiously that the mere friction would have sufficed for a crocodile taking a Turkish bath. This operation he mingled with exclamations against the perfidy of Kate, who knew that soft soap applied to the eyeball bit like fun. Her conduct was specially heinous in view of the fact that he had risen early that morning for the express purpose of taking down her stove-pipe, at the bend of which a large amount of soot had collected.

Here, then, was gratitude for you! And she could find nothing better to do than, when her husband was dancing about in pain, to stand with the towel in her hand, held well behind her, and laugh! Talk of cruelty to animals, indeed. It was enough to keep

any thoughtful man from getting married. In the intervals of this harangue Billy's face and neck, red as a beet root, kept appearing and disappearing in the towel.

Mr. Molesay presently edged in a question.

"'Can Ogg do without me to-day?'" repeated Billy. "He will have to, if *you* want me, that's flat! Kate there can go along and break it to him. What time shall we be back? Can't say—well, all the better—give him the longer spell. Ogg's getting too fat! And this is Friday, too, and the fortnightly pay of those Waterworks' Irishmen!"

And Billy laughed.

"There," said Kate, "now you are laughing at the thought of Ogg getting the soap in *his* eyes!"

But Billy was not quick at this sort of thing.

He answered shortly, "Oh no—it was his having all those Irishmen—the water-trust navvies, that is—to keep in order! That's what I was laughing at. Nothing to do with soap at all!"

Kate glanced at Mr. Molesay, but the little man was much too intent on his business to think of jesting.

"You see," he said, sombrely, "it's that Mad Mag. She's off to kill her boy—McGhie's Kid. You know him. He's at the 'Peat.' She will find the road and walk the twelve miles by mid-afternoon. She will ask to see him. It is visiting day, and Carvel, the superintendent, will know no reason why she should not see the boy. Then she—well, you know very well what she will do!"

"She would never do the like to her ain son? Never! Oh, never!" cried Kate Earsman, who thought of little Polly. Her husband knew better.

"She will kill him like a rat, I tell ye, for putting away the Knifer!" he said. "He mastered her, did Knifer Jackson. And because o' that—she was juist terrible set on the Knifer!"

The two men took counsel together.

It seemed good to them to take the train to Kingside Station, and while one of them—Mr. Molesay for choice—hurried along to warn Carvel of Mad Mag's intentions as to his favourite pupil, the other was to keep a keen watch for the approach of the Kid's mother.

There was yet a full hour, however, before the train would leave. It was a fast through train, stopping only once before it reached the little moorland station of Kingside, but there was nothing in Edinburgh capable of putting them on the spot any sooner.

It was at this juncture that Mr. Molesay, blushing slightly, remarked that he was compelled to look in and make some final arrangements for Sunday night's meeting with the Rev. Harry Rodgers.

As he went hurriedly out, Kate smiled knowingly at Billy, who gazed blankly back.

"What do ye make o' that?" said Kate, looking steadily at her husband, as if to compel the exercise of intelligence.

"Make o't?" said Billy, scratching his great fuzz of hair. "That—that Maister Molesay's busy, of course! What else?"

Kate shoved her little head against his shoulder. Then she whispered:

"Before we were married, Billy, when you had half an hour to yoursel', where did ye gang?"

"Why," said Billy, simply, "up to Gape and Suck's to see you, of course—where else?"

That was an easy question easily answered. Kate's head continued to root in the tangle and underbrush about Billy's right ear.

"You old silly," she murmured, softly. Then after a pause she added, "Do you think you are the only man that ever was in love?"

"You don't think that Mr. Molesay—at his age?"

Kate nodded rapidly three or four times.

"As if age mattered—in a man!" said Kate, with the certainty of an expert.

"It will be the young leddy he fetched away from the castle," ventured Billy; "the lass that wadna marry the auld lord—him that Knifer is to be hanged for?"

"Wha else?" said his wife. "Oh, you silly! You are going out there to play gooseberry. She and her sister have gone to Egham Castle. Mrs. Rodgers told me when she was lookin' oot the music at the organ before the practice last nicht, Billy. So he'll maybe see her after a'! Run awa', Billy, and see ye bring him back safe. I'm off to break the news to Ogg!"

Kate was lacing her boots as she spoke, with a quick *whip-whip* of drilled fingers, accustomed to do little things in the least possible time.

It was true. Mrs. Rodgers smiled in Mr. Molesay's face when he inquired for her husband, and remarked that Harry was at the meeting of Presbytery—as Mr. Molesay knew just as well as she did herself. Then she said that, for what he came about, she could give him just as reliable information as Mr. Rodgers himself, in fact, slightly more so.

Mr. Molesay flushed crimson to the roots of his shining silver hair.

"I thought I would also ask after Miss Patricia," he said. "I heard that her sister had come from the South to visit her—a very merry young lady, I am given to understand."

"The two have gone off together," said Mrs. Rodgers, "back to Egham Castle. Their uncle wants to forgive and forget, it seems. And I fear there is but little chance of our seeing Patricia back among us again."

The flush on Mr. Molesay's cheek paled slowly, and then reaffirmed itself as a thought crossed his mind.

"Thank you, Mrs. Rodgers," he said. "Now I must go—I have an appointment!"

. . . . .

"And do you know," said Mrs. Rodgers to her husband as she poured out the tea, "the man actually went away fumbling the leaves of a little Murray's time-table? I do think men in love are the greatest ostriches! They think other people have no eyes. And when it is all no use—and he knows it is no use. Oh, I have no patience with you!"

"If Mrs. Henry Rodgers will kindly explain what I, personally, have to do with the love affairs of Mr. Archbold Molesay——" began her husband, oracularly.

"Tut!" snapped his wife. "I suppose it is thought very clever—at clerical clubs—that kind of about-the-bush talk. But pray keep it for your Monday afternoons. It is wasted on me. Why don't you *speak* to Mr. Molesay?"

"Speak to Molesay?" said her husband, dimly and vaguely searching for a solution. "Why in the world should I speak to Molesay? He is a good ten years older than I am. If you are so anxious, *and* so well informed, speak to him yourself. Where's my study coat?"

. . . . .

Meantime the through train delivered Mr. Molesay and Billy duly at Kingside Station. The station-master, a brusque little snip-snappy man, much imbued with the dignities of his office, called out to them to cross the line by the overhead bridge, and to remember that their tickets (return) were good only for the week-end. Then very reluctantly, not finding anything else against them, he let them pass through the white gate, and so down upon the face of the moor.

Egham lay dimly away to the right, hidden among trees, and high behind tall park walls. Right in front were the buildings of the "Peat," with all the black *débris* of the fire already cleared away, and the foundations of the new and enlarged "Athabasca" roughly sketched in concrete foundations and the beginnings of masonry.

Billy, now well informed and highly suspicious, observed, with pride in his wife's acuteness, that Mr. Molesay looked long and wistfully in the direction of the green policies of Egham, before turning his face resolutely toward the bare but healthy quadrangles of the "Peat."

"It's her he's thinkin' aboot!" murmured Billy to himself.

Thus the world knew more about the love affairs of Mr. Archbold Molesay than that innocent little gentleman himself.

In one way they came too late to the "Peat"—in another too early. Mad Mag had not arrived. But the "Kid"—interest having been made for him in the highest quarters—had recently been allowed privileges. He had departed in company with the two Egham Castle young ladies, who had taken him across the moor for the purpose of helping them to carry their photographing and sketching apparatus.

This was Patricia's idea, and she had expressed it in such absolute terms to Mr. Hearne, that it became necessary for that man-under-authority to obtain for the Kid the necessary relaxation of discipline, prior to the issue of Home Office papers of complete discharge on the grounds of innocence and additional evidence.

"Poor boy, he has never had a chance, Hearne," Pat had said; "and if he stays with Marthe and Willie, he will be brought up as an educated man. He is a gentleman already. My old dad would give him many messes of pottage for *his* birthright. But that affair in the court, and the publication of the report in the papers, rather knocked the feet from under the dad's pedigree business. And a good job, too. Still, if we have the chief of our name upon our hands, we must teach him how to walk and talk and behave. You do very well in your 'Peat,' but, after all, there are some things you are deficient in!"

"Happy Kid!" said Hearne, sighing pretentiously.

"I offer myself as an additional subject—half-savage, half-colonial! What could you wish for more?"

"Not a bit of it," said Pat. "Remember our compact. You go on with your hedging-and-ditching, your brick-and-mortaring, your saw-pitting and plan-drawing till you are as poor as a church mouse for the second time. Then you can marry Baby Lant and live happy ever after. She is to be the heiress now, you know. My nose is out of joint!"

"Baby Lant, indeed!" exclaimed that young lady, dashing fiercely into the conversation. "When Baby Lant is in need of your leavings, Miss ex-Heiress Patricia, she will let you know. And as to being an heiress, Baby Lant never saw the man she would shake a stick at, when she had not so much as tuppens-farthing to her name. And if the heiress-ship—if it really comes off—makes any difference, call her Ebrew Jew, call her Yellow Peril, call her Ching-Chang-Fu with his pigtail on!"

Her mood was so fierce that Hearne hastened to assure her that, so far as he was personally concerned, he would not dream of calling her any of these things.

. . . . .

On the present occasion the two enterprising young women took the Kid to carry their paraphernalia, for the purpose of educating him in the suavities of the English language as professed by Pat McGhie and her sister, Baby Lant.

Thus it came to pass that Baby Lant's Athenian predilection for telling and hearing some new thing defeated the strategy of that strong man Billy Earsman, that careful man Archbold Molesay—not to speak of Hearne Mackenzie and a good half score of warders whom Carvel had bidden to be on the look-out for Mad Mag coming along the Edinburgh Road.

It was at the place called the One Thorn Tree that it happened. This ancient growth overhung the deep gorge which divided the plateau of Maw

Moss from the Three Ridings Valley, and Patricia thought she could make a good photograph of the low, twisted branches, using the distant wood as a background. While Baby Lant, more optimistic, talked of the picture she was going to paint—"something weird and uncommon, with the branches bending their heads like snakes about to strike, and the boughs like the fingers of a witch's hand upraised in cursing—all against a stormy 'King Lear sky'! And, oh," she concluded, "I shall use such a lot of rose madder and terra-verte for the grays! I'm afraid I have not brought enough! Perhaps the Kid would not mind going back to the castle and asking William for them—they are in tubes, right in the middle of my dressing table, among the combs and brushes! The usual place."

"Baby Lant, you should be ashamed of yourself!" said Pat.

"And I prithee, why?—give me a reason why I should be ashamed of myself on so fine a day!" demanded Baby Lant.

"If reasons were as plentiful as blackberries," cried Pat, "would a true woman give her young sister, a mere child, a reason upon compulsion?"

"Ah, that's better—that's more like our old Pat before she went and fell in love!" said Baby Lant; "and as to leaving paints and things about among my brushes, my hair is such a very unfashionable colour that every little helps. I always clean my brushes on it—but you mustn't tell anybody. It's a recipe. I may make my fortune out of it some day, when I can no longer support myself in any other honest way!"

"I wonder if you will never be serious, Baby Lant," said Patricia, with a world-weary sigh, as she watched the Kid's straight little back dodging about among the green marsh pools and criss-cross peat hags between them and Egham.

The easel of Baby Lant was by this time camped

in front of the One Thorn Tree, and, with her gaze fixed on a heaven without a cloud and as blue as her eyes, she began to sketch in her stormy sky.

"Me an' Turner—he's dead now, but was a celebrated painter in Mr. Ruskin's day—we think alike," affirmed Baby Lant. "We always look at one scene and draw another. *He* could help it. I can't! But that's not what I was going to say. What was it? Oh, yes, it was about you, Patricia! I wonder if it's like that with all girls. Before you knew HIM —you held your head up and 'looked the whole world in the face, for you owed not any man'—that sort o' expression. But now, instead of cheeking the universe, and not being too respectful even to the Milky Way—you go about as croaky and droopy as an old crow with a broken wing. Poor Pat! I knew her, Horatio, a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. Where be her jibes now? Her gambols? Her flashes of merriment that were wont to set the schoolroom fire irons in a roar?"

"You don't know anything about it, yet, Baby Lant," said Patricia, loftily, "but some day you will, when the right man comes along!"

She thought a little, her eyes on the blue of the distant hills.

"Yes, it will come to you, Baby," she said, softly.

"Faith," cried Atalanta, scornfully, "and I hope it will do me the favour not to be in a hurry, then, if it is all 'virgin rites and strewments, and bringings home with bell and book and candle!' Hence, loathed Melancholy, and Chaos, and Old Nick—forsake your temples dim, Peor and Balaam!"

Baby Lant, in her solitude, had been doing some good reading, but it had somehow got a little mixed in that bright, rippling head of hers. The result was not always entirely respectful. All the same, her laugh was sunshiny to hear. It certainly did her sister Pat good, and perhaps was designed for that purpose.

Meanwhile the Kid proceeded on his way, whistling happily. The world was beginning anew for him. He was now out most of the day—in the fields with Mr. Hearne, or with Mrs. Carvel, attending to the fowls in the hen runs. And the ladies—the young ladies were taking quite a wonderful interest in him. For the first time in his life Kid McGhie was not being harried from post to pillar.

About midway between the "Peat" and Egham Castle the Kid had occasion to cross the road. In the ditch a woman was lying, her knees drawn up, her chin sunk on her breast. Her eyes were open, but there was a ghastly expression in them—something wild, strange, not of this earth.

"Mother!" cried the Kid, instantly running toward her.

She seeemed to hear and yet not hear. As he bent over her the pupils of her eyes dilated, flashed wickedly, and then narrowed to a tiny slit.

"What is it, mother?" cried the Kid. "Tell me. What has happened? Were you coming to see me?"

The pale, drawn face twitched, the head nodded, and in the beckoning eyebrows the Kid read a desire that he should come nearer.

"You want me to lift you up, mother?" said the Kid, anxiously.

Mad Mag nodded again, a little more decidedly. Her lips formed some words that the Kid did not hear. He approached, and was just about to take his mother in his arms, when, like flame bursting through smoke, something flashed from under her checked apron. Luckily for the Kid, and for the rest of the story, he was stooping low at that moment, and the half-paralysed arm, making its last effort, struck high. The blade of the knife cut through the thick collar of his official coat, passed beyond, and fell on the road with a hard jangle on the newly broken and still unrolled macadam. The next moment

Hearne Mackenzie, more active than the others, pulled the Kid behind him, while from different sides Mr. Molesay, Billy Earsman, Patricia, and Baby Lant converged upon the scene.

Mad Mag had recovered her tongue now. But she tried in vain to reach the fallen weapon.

"I'll kill him—kill him—kill him!" she sputtered. "Kill him for what he did to Knifer!"

The words were thickly uttered, indistinct, but Hearne Mackenzie understood them.

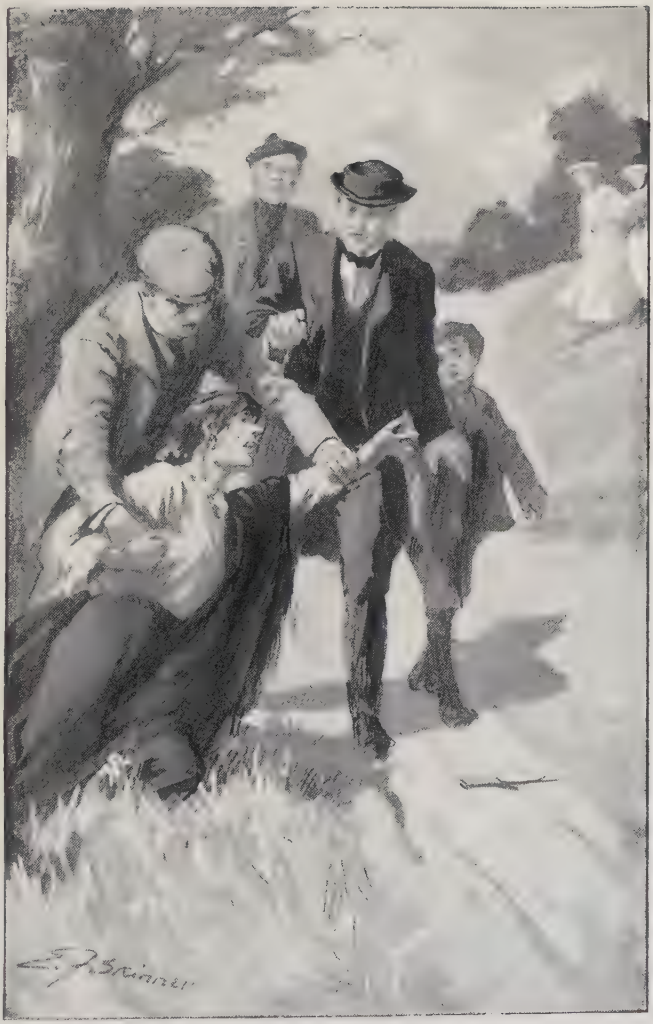
"He is your own son!" he said, as he easily controlled her arms with his brown, masculine grasp.

"My son—David McGhie's son, ye mean! Never son o' mine," she cried. "He gi'ed Knifer Jackson, the only man i' the world, up to the clutches o' the hangman. I wad hang for him, aye, brave and willin'—if only my arm had done its duty! And the Knifer's an innocent man—I tell ye sae mysel'! Wherefore should I lie, a dying woman? He was the ae true man, and that gorb selled him awa'. Oh, let me get at him, juist for yince, kind gentlemen!"

Before Patricia and Baby Lant, who had the rougher road to travel, had time to arrive, Billy had secured the knife which lay glittering on the clean stones of the highway. It was new and had been bought on purpose. He concealed it, and then began to stroll about in an uninterested fashion. For, just when the girls came up, a spasm of pain traversed the body of Mad Mag. She seemed to sink into herself.

"Take away the boy," said Mr. Molesay to Hearne, without noticing Patricia and Baby Lant, who were still a little behind the heathery ridge, which made the only fence of the moorland roadside. "Take away the boy—this is *my* work!"

He took off his hat, and the mellow light fell mildly on his silver head. To that poor sinful woman he spoke as if he had been the very Son of Man himself, turned aside a little from the wayside to rest by Jacob's Well. What he said is between him and the



"MY SON NEVER SON O' MINE! OH, LET ME GET AT HIM!"

woman taken in sin. Mr. Molesay had a sprinkling of physic, and at the first glance he saw that all was over.

Those who stood afar off in wonder—Hearne and the Kid, Patricia and Baby Lant—looked at this scene of the faithful shepherd dealing with this very far-strayed sheep of his flock. They heard fragments of sentences: "Ask, and it shall be given!" "Knock, and it shall be opened." "In My Father's house——"

But still the woman turned her head from side to side and moaned uncomforted.

"Oh, if I kenned that they wadna hang Knifer —my ain man, Knifer Jackson, I wad be content to dee and gang to the Ill Bit!"

Then a wild, strange thought seemed to launch itself across her drink-sodden, ignorant brain.

"Bear witness," she cried, "you, Mr. Molesay, that are a godly man and respected even by the poliss—you, Mr. Hearne Mackenzie, I ken ye, I saw ye at the trial when they condemned *him*—you, young leddies—that's four witnesses. I hae four witnesses and only three are needed. Tak' oot your book and write, Mr. Molesay! Then I'll sign, as the law requires!"

This was Mad Mag's confession:

"As I, Margaret Jackson, or McGhie, or Caigton, am a dyin' woman—as I, Margaret, wife of said Knifer Jackson, presently lying in the Calton under sentence o' death, for what he never did, hope for salvation, it wasna him that killed your faither, Lord Athabasca, at the muckle hoose caa'ed the Three Ridings. *It was me.* I killed him wi' my ain man's knife. I was there helping him! I swear to this wi' my dyin' breath, and may I never taste God's mercy if I speak a lie!"

And so, with this great oath on her lips, the spirit parted, almost before Hearne Mackenzie had finished writing down her confession.

"True or untrue," he said, "it may be enough to

get the man a reprieve—for a time, at least. Therefore, we had better all sign it." So they signed, all four of them, and Billy Earsman added his X mark.

Mr. Molesay stood musing a moment upon the empty shell of that which had now forever escaped him. His head was still uncovered, and of the little group standing about, only Baby Lant—who had never seen death—and McGhie's Kid, whom death that day had passed so closely by, were in tears.

Then the police missionary murmured softly, not a text, as perhaps he ought, but the following ancient words, favourites of his :

> " Christlike it is for sin to grieve,
> Godlike it is all sin to leave."

" And this woman," he continued, pointing with his finger, " is at least godlike in this, that she has left her body of sin behind her. Who among us shall cast the first stone, and judge the escaped soul ? "

And in Billy Earsman's arms, poor Mad Mag—her oath scarce cold upon her lips, but with the strange blessing of one who has taken another's sin upon her, glorifying her face—was borne to the little, clean, whitewashed mortuary of the " Peat " Reformatory.

And they shut the door, so that no man knows whether the angels twain who do such offices came down to keep their accustomed watch, one at the head and one at the foot, where the body was laid.

Perhaps !

CHAPTER XXV

BABY LANT'S REPENTANCE

THE little city missionary went up to the Calton to carry the condemned man the news of his wife's dying confession. Knifer Jackson scarcely lifted his eyelashes as he listened.

"She said that, did she?" he said. "Good old girl, Mag—she did what she could!"

More than that could not be drawn from him. Nor, indeed, did the little silver-topped man try very hard. He knew that it would be nearer the time, when the hammers were clanking in the yard, and the great beam of execution was being protruded, that such a heart as the Knifer's would be softened.

But perhaps not even then. For Knifer was of those rare criminals, more numerous, however, in the Three Islands than in France, who, like Avinain, that terrible butcher, take for their motto "*N'avouez jamais!*"—"Never confess!"

Still, at intervals the little missionary wrestled with the condemned man. For, to his thinking, there was no soul that could not be saved, which was not made to be saved. Consequently, he despaired not even of the Knifer—though, be it said, at present the Knifer gave him little enough encouragement.

"I am, maybe, no lang for this world," said the Knifer, philosophically, "and I dinna think that it wad do me mickle guid in the country where I am to travel, to pretend wi' the lip to what is no in the heart! But if it will do *you* ony guid, I will aye say a prayer after ye—you taking the responsibility, as

it were. And if you could reconcile it wi' your conscience to bring me in a twist o' tobacco, Kinahan's Irish Blackguard for choice, I wad caa' the maitter square!"

These things did Mr. Archbold Molesay, immaculate police missionary. And if any of the warders of the prison, or the master of it himself, had by the smell of the nostril any suspicion of the contents of his coat-tail pockets, they winked hard upon the hither eye as he passed in and out.

It is well to be trusted and have a character. For had any other come with an order of admission to the condemned cell, he would have been searched to his lamb's-wool undervest, in fear of prussic acid, or other means of "cheatin' the widdy."

All the same the representations of the five as to the death and dying depositions of Mad Mag were thought of sufficient consequence that the Knifer received a reprieve to allow of inquiries to be made. But the letter of the secretary of state to the prisoner's advocate defined clearly that, unless something more was brought to light, there was no idea of extending any permanent pardon to the Knifer. In short, in high quarters Mag's story was not believed. She had perjured herself in vain. And yet perhaps not wholly, if it be true that there is One who regards the intents of the heart.

Still, from here and there, from neighbours in the great "land" of Hagman's Close, from dwellers in the vicinity of the Three Ridings, there arrived at the bureau of justice certain corroborations of Mag's story. One had seen her leave Edinburgh that afternoon in company with her husband. This was thought a remarkable thing at the time, but was understood to mean that, in the absence of McGhie's Kid and Duffus, the Knifer had to put up with the best assistance he could obtain.

A farmer, looking his sheep high on Kingside, had watched a woman like Mag going straight across the

fields from the direction of Three Ridings. The Knifer himself had nothing to say, for or against.

"Maybe I didna do this that they are hangin' me for," he said, "but there is no manner o' use in lettin' Mag, puir silly wench, bear the weight o't—and her deid! Na, na, let every herrin' find the weight o' its ain tail, as I am like to do some fine caller morning before long. And the guidwives o' the High Street will stop turnin' the ham in the pan, syne look oot at the window wi' the fork in their hand, and say as the black flag gaes flapperin' up, 'Aye—yon's the Knifer, puir chield! Noo he kens what's what better than ony minister amang them a'!'"

Curiously enough, the Knifer asked more than once for news of the Kid. He seemed to bear no malice, and even expressed a wish to see him. But this was beyond even Mr. Molesay's mandate. The authorities feared some sudden transport of anger. The Knifer understood and waved his request aside almost gracefully.

"Aweel," he said, "let him be. If he is to be reared as a gentleman in a minister's hoose, it is maybe as weel that he should have as few memories as possible. But I think he will aye be a fair good locksmith a' his life. I wot that 'Blind Jacob's' will have done that muckle for him!"

. . . . .

It was a fair, clear, brisk day in a somewhat chilly August that the Kid started down to revisit for the second time his native town of Kirkmessan. He was now "Master Alexander McGhie," and the discipline of the "Peat" had squared his shoulders and hardened his features, yet without taking the boyishness out of his cheeks.

Patricia had not visited her home for a long time. She had been looking a little pale of late. The suspense was telling on her. So it was resolved that she should escort "Master Alexander" down to the care of her

sister, a certain Mrs. William Heath Symington, intimately known to this history as "Marthe."

As soon as this design became known it was remarkable—according to Baby Lant—how many gentlemen had business in that customarily little-visited provincial town.

For at the last moment Baby Lant had decided to come, too—to see fair play, as she alleged.

"I want a rest from uncle and aunt," she declared. "I suppose they were more bearable in the time of the Hammers—who took care of them, setting them in their baby chairs, and taking them out, like twins in one perambulator! But now since they have awaked to the belief that the necessary daily repairs upon their persons can be effected with the aid of their guests—really, Patricia, a frivolous person such as I cannot stand very much of them at a time. I am going to beg of Philip Egbert to have you taken into favour again——"

"No—no," cried Patricia, gladly establishing herself in the carriage. "Let every heiress bear her own burden. It's your turn now. And as for me:

"'Come, birdie, come, and live with me,
You shall be happy, light, and free!
You shall be all the world to me,
Come, birdie, come . . . AND live with me!'"

"Pat," said Baby Lant, bitterly, "if you want to have a six-shilling novel—uncut, at bookstall, no discount—thrown at your head, you have only to say so, you know!"

"Well," pursued Patricia, more meekly, "you must make allowances—it was only the effect of being poor and happy which made me burst, as it were, into unpremeditated song!"

"Unpremeditated fiddlesticks!" cried Baby Lant. "One thing I know—if I had been convoying the

Kid down to Marthe's I should have had the pleasure of his company alone! But with you, Pat—one has half the countryside in attendance. I declare—these two men—well . . . if . . . ever I did! One is hunting for grapes and unripe fruit at the cigarette stall—and the other, that's Mr. Molesay, is gazing at the bookstall as if he were seriously in debate as to what wouldn't hurt your youthful mind. It's a shame, Pat, and I won't have it! He *shall* pay attention to me. I'm not going to sit five hours and see the Kid worship you with his big eyes, and Mr. Molesay flush up and stop in the middle of his sentences, and Hearne, the great stupid, keep looking at you as if you were good to eat—candy or something!"

"Hush, Baby, here they come with the boy!" whispered Patricia.

"*I* don't care," said Baby Lant. "Mr. Molesay is going to take some notice of *me*, or I'm going to jump out of the carriage window, or up into the luggage rack, and then he'll have to!"

Just then the men entered, bearing their treasures of books, pamphlets, fruit, while the Kid, all uneasy —but very proud—in his new rig, was given a place in the corner—because, as the curl of Baby Lant's lip intimated scornfully, "everybody else wanted to sit beside Patricia!"

. . . . .

Each mile that the racing wheels of the deep-blue Caledonian locomotive put behind them, every arriving landscape, seemed to take the Kid into a new world —a world of hills and fine rare aerial distances, and, strangest of all, of foregrounds in which people laughed and talked and smiled!

At first he sat merely amazed, uncomprehending. Did other people talk like that? Such a flow of little kindly nothings, just to show each other how happy

they were! The people the Kid had previously known swore, threatened, ordered, bullied—punctuating all their sayings and doings with blows. Well, no, not all—there was his father.

Yes, his real father—David McGhie, of Back Mill Lands. He had been different. He had been more like these people—only sad, only silent. But he had been of their world. And aching vaguely in his boyish heart, the Kid began to watch and imitate. He would try to say things as they said them—especially Baby Lant. He would do things as they did them—especially Baby Lant.

Never had he dreamed of anything so bewitching as this girl now seemed to him. Miss Patricia and Hearne had been kind to him—oh, yes, and Mr. Molesay. Baby Lant he had only seen for a minute or two, that terrible day on the moor. Yes, Baby, perhaps it was for that reason, and still more because of the adorable way you had of throwing your arms back and clasping your little hands behind your head—lazy Baby Lant, blue-eyed Baby Lant, with lips that curled sometimes with delightful malice, sometimes with laughing guile—this small kid of the goats lost his heart to you. And, indeed, save that Patricia had done everything for him, small blame to him! But in love, that is usually the last thing that makes any difference.

It was with shame that the Kid passed the ticket collector at Kirkmessan. He knew him for Tom Shewan, the station master's son at Portnessock. But Tom did not recognise this young gentleman in the well-cut town suit, the carefully trimmed hair, the rare and low-toned speech. Above all, the facts that he was in the company of "some o' thae McGhie lasses," and was going to "the minister's," compelled Tom Shewan—actually, yes, he did it—to touch his new railway cap. If he had suspected that he had done such a thing to McGhie's Kid, to use his own expression, "he would have 'bust'!"

But he did *not* know. And so the fact marks a new stage in the life history, the rise and progress of McGhie's Kid.

It was something from which the Kid was rather inclined to turn away his eyes, to see the welcome that Marthe gave them in the little square stone "kist" of a manse at the corner of the Carlops Road. There was a new tenderness in her eyes, for was there not a brass-fended cot upstairs in which lay what Baby Lant called "a little squalling brat," and the brat's nearest relative, on the female side, designated as "mother's own sweetness," "mammy's four-leafed clover," with other foolish names—hearing which Baby Lant cried out, unsympathetically, "Oh, give it its father's sermons to play with. It will understand them perfectly. There never *was* such a wondrous babe in this world!"

"Daisy is not an '*It*,' I would have you remember, Atalanta," cried the proud mother; "and she doesn't want sermons! She has your old writing desk, the one you left here before you went away, to play with. The letters were all scattered about the nursery floor—hello, Baby Lant, where are you going to in such a hurry?"

And disregarding Baby Lant's hurried rush up the stairs to save her private correspondence from the fell grip of the destroyer, Marthe turned to Pat with a smile of quiet triumph.

"Being married does teach you a few odd things," she said. "For instance, how to deal with younger sisters when they are impertinent!"

"I suppose you don't include me, Marthe," said Pat, gravely. "I don't dance waltzes with twirling chairs any more. And I speak of babies respectfully, and always by the personal pronoun denoting sex —never as 'It.' There are signs of grace about me."

"Yes," said Marthe sagely, throwing her arm about her sister's neck (having first noticed that her

husband was showing the Kid round the orchard, and explaining the system of grafting fruit trees to Daisy); "of course it was dreadful of you to run away and all that—but——"

"You would have done the same, Marthe—if HE had been Willie!"

"Oh, of course," said Marthe, "but that's impossible! There is no one in the least like Willie. That is the conclusion I have come to now—though I knew it before. And he is so nice with baby. And Daisy knows him, too—says 'Gooo' and 'Guggle-guggle,' and pulls his moustache. It's wonderful!"

"Mr. Symington will now be able to add the usual 'Word to Mothers' at the end of his sermons with more serious conviction!" said Pat, somewhat in her earlier manner.

"Willie's sermons are not like anybody else's—you shall hear!" said the loyal Marthe. "I hope your . . . friend . . . has right views, Pat!"

"I'm sure I never asked him," cried Pat, with a certain indignation. "He has twice spent every penny he possessed on a Reformatory for Boys. Then he worked like a navvy for a hundred a year, because he had given away all he possessed to make his poor boys better. As to his views, you can ask him yourself. And if you don't like them, you can . . . forbid us the house!"

"Dear—dear—little spitfire Pat," cried Marthe, winding her arms, grown the faintest tinge more matronly in their curves, about her sister's neck. "He shall be a Mohammedan—that he shall, if he likes! And he can spread his praying carpet in the corner of my drawing-room. He shall cry 'Allah-il-Allah' or whatever it is, morning and night, from the top of Willie's steeple. But don't be angry with your Marthe any more!"

Effectively, no one could long be angry with Marthe. Daisy's grandmother came down to see her every day, and seemed in the fair way to spoil her when

she grew up. For already the little thing squirmed in her cot, and held out her arms at the sound of the stiff-rustling brown silk on the nursery stairs, which pleased the old lady very much.

P. Brydson McGhie was recovering from the shock which the trial had given to his "pedigreeing." He generally turned up, however, once a Sunday—on fair, rainless, windless days—to patronise the Martyrs' Kirk and to drop a whole golden sovereign into the plate with a resounding clang!

P. Brydson did not, at first, approve of the Kid. But, then, his opinion was not asked. He had, however a great reverence for Baby Lant, who was to be an heiress—*vice* Patricia, superseded—and also for Patricia who—it was not too early to take for granted—would one day be my Lady Athabasca. To be the father of "a genuine peeress" was even worth more to P. Brydson than to be chief of the clan and head of the name—wholly barren honours both.

In any case the Kid was finally presented to him as a somewhat shy boy whom Pat and Baby Lant had taken a fancy to, and had asked Marthe to help them bring up. Very proper, he said, it was excellent, for the Symingtons were not at all well off, and it is good for young people to bear the yoke in their youth. P. Brydson had done it himself. Most proper, indeed! He would look in occasionally and see how the boy got on in arithmetic. He had always noticed that his son-in-law, being a minister, was notably defective in that branch—a thing by no means singular in his class.

Thus, for the first time in his life, the head of the Clan McGhie had a chance in life. A justice of the peace was taking an interest in him.

. . . . .

It must be allowed, however, that "the behaviour of Baby Lant" left something to be desired at this

time. Indeed it would require a book as large as this entire history to do it justice—and, speaking from the craftsman's point of view, I have a great mind to write it. The title is there at any rate, and a very good one it is.

Marthe designated it as "nothing short of scandalous." So the volume ought by analogy to have some considerable success. "The Behaviour of Baby Lant" is not yet, however, upon the market.

Patricia remembered with compunction how she used to balance herself on two chair backs and was silent. Hearne Mackenzie would not have cared if Baby Lant had publicly bayed the moon, so long as he was permitted to escort Patricia about, and see the places where she used to lie on the banks of the Messan Water, hot and lazy, wondering why only boys were allowed to go in swimming! Or he would look with his trained woodman's eye at the trees Pat used to climb, and the younger brethren of the green apples she used to—no, not *steal*—but obtain without the consent of the proprietor! He was introduced to all the McGhie brothers, even Rob having sobered down into something so reasonable as a clerk in Dribble & Hillowton's lawyers' office in Kirkmessan town. They all wished that Gilbert had been there, and wrote off a letter to say that they had a joint invitation to go and shoot at Three Ridings! So it was all right, if only, conjunctly and severally, they could "fudge" as much out of the "old 'un" as would pay for their gun licences—the fellow was so dead gone on Pat that he would lend them all his best guns. He, too, was "all right," and had even shot grizzly bear. But otherwise, owing to the unaccountable infatuation aforesaid, he was "dead soft," and could be worked like modelling clay in the hands of the potter, by these highly agreeable brothers McGhie. Toward the fund necessary for exploiting such a potential mine of wealth, Gilbert was warned to "strike the mater" for as many fivers

as he could, to help him through with his "exams," and then to economise like fun, so that gun and game licences together with tips for the keepers might be forthcoming when the visit to Three Ridings took place!

Nice, thoughtful, provident young men were the brothers McGhie, and, as saith the poet, "most remarkable like you"—and me!

But Baby Lant! It is obvious that her much-to-be-reprobated behaviour must have been with the only unattached adult of the party—that is, with Mr. Molesay.

And so it was. Let it be said for her, however, that she had been "dared" to it by the wicked and designing Hearne, who had been struck by the silent worship with which the little city missionary watched Patricia. Baby Lant could do no harm, he thought. She might even effect a cure, on the principle of "two into one goes no times."

Thus, had Mr. Molesay been other than what he was, treading a wilderness way—pillar of fire before, and behind, in the lurid red of the dead sunset, the guardian pillar of cloud—he might have been butchered to make an Atalantean holiday.

But Mr. Molesay, though in his deepest heart preserving ever a memory of that day—the one day of his life when he had wandered through flowery meads, the hand of an innocent and gentle girl on his arm, great turquoise eyes looking up to his, her lips chattering of all things bright and fresh and glad like herself—remembered also that there were those waiting for him in the grimy Cowgate with stronger claims. He could not, he thought, have made this girl better, or truer, or simpler, or more trusting and worthy of trust than she was.

"God bless her!" murmured the little city missionary, with an involuntary uplift of the heart. He thought she was like her sister, Patricia, which was not at all true.

"God bless you, my dear!" he said aloud, as she smiled trustfully up at him. "Your smile is like the white clouds in the blue when the sun shines—like the morning light on banks of yellow broom and whin in the springtime. I am glad God made it!"

And then Baby Lant, for the first time in her life, had the grace—quite temporary—to be ashamed of herself.

"Are you not happy here?" she asked, a little sobered and wistful somehow.

"Happy!" he answered. "So happy that I am fairly ashamed of myself, when there are those waiting for me away back yonder in the dim place —Billy and Kate Earsman, the big blacksmith, Jock Cockpen——"

"Oh," said Baby Lant, clasping her hands swiftly before her, "no wonder you hate and despise me —thinking of such things as that!"

"Hate you—despise you? Oh, my dear!" said Mr. Archbold Molesay, turning toward her, his hat, as usual, in his hand, and a light wind touching the argentine ripple of his hair.

The girl turned her eyes to him, dimmed with a light dew, which was not tears, but a sense of unworthiness transforming itself into moisture.

"Ah," she said, "some day, perhaps, I shall be serious and wise, like Marthe. Or make everybody think how splendid I am—like Pat! But just now I can't—I don't seem to know how—that is——"

And what had been only a generous moisture deepened into wells, overbrimmed, and ran down the wild-rose cheeks in big tears. Baby Lant could do this when she liked, but she was not playing this time.

Said the city missionary, laying his hand very gently on her arm, and turning her about to see the green cowslip-spangled fields, the meadows creamed with meadowsweet, all fading away into the pale-

blue distance, and arched over by the bluer sky, "I said before that God made your smile. And now I say that He made you as you are, for your own work—to make all, women and men alike, glad by your beauty. Why not? There is nothing more pernicious than the idea that good women are jealous of beautiful women. If all things were made with a purpose, be sure, my dear, that your beauty was given you to bring joy to weary, anxious, warring hearts. Be glad and gay. That is what you are in the world for. Remember the purple hill shadows on lonely lochs where no one sees them, hidden in the vast of the hills. Think what gorgeous sunsets are wasted on those wide ocean circles where not a single ship ever comes from year's end to year's end! But there—I am at it once more—sermonising again. As I said before—the dyer's hand, my dear. But I shall not forget you—or your sister. I go back to-night to the dim place—the under-city—where I must labour till I die, among the spirits in prison."

The little missionary was speaking so softly now that none could hear him but Baby Lant. They were at the extreme high end of the narrow policies of Balmaghie, and could trace for miles beneath them the course of the Messan Water.

"And did you never love anyone, really?" said Baby Lant, softly, all her folly having dropped from her as a cloak falls from the shoulders, "any woman, I mean?"

The little missionary stood looking down at the wide spread of the dale and up at the purple of the heather breaking out on the flanks of the hills. He was silent so long that Baby Lant, afraid that she had offended him, hastened to add, "Don't tell me if you would rather not! Please don't!—I—I—I didn't mean to hurt you!"

"Yes, one," said the missionary, pensively, but not looking directly at her, "but—it was too late. I had not the right!"

"Our Pat—I know!" murmured Baby Lant, not as a question at all, but with all the sympathy in her heart.

The missionary was silent. Something of the wistfulness which dwells in all blue distances when looked at long, came into his dim eyes.

"I have not the right to ask any woman to share my lot," he said. "I have argued it out before. In some ways the Catholics are right. For the far lands of fever and danger—for the dim city closes—it *is* good for a man to be alone. It is good—it is good——!"

"For the man?" queried Baby Lant, who was watching him sharply. "Archbold Molesay, dare you say that it is good for you?"

The little missionary started at the mention of his name. But he only firmed his lips and continued:

"Even if I had been young—and she—free," he faltered here a little—"I dared not. I could not have taken her—there. Once she was amongst us, and I saw. She never could have been *of* us. She passed by, like the angels along the streets of the cities of the plain. Well," he turned sharply, as if to put aside the subject with a wave of his hand, "what am I saying? What folly—ah, what terrible folly! You will not tell her. It came over me—something in the day! Something also, in your eyes, perhaps—yes, I think it was that!"

"Oh!" cried Baby Lant, moved as she never had been before. "What a pity you did not fall in love with me and not with Pat. But you didn't, you see. And oh, I want so to help you—and I can't!"

"I might have been your father, child," said the little missionary, "and I see that your words run away with your kind heart. You will be a blessing and a brightness to a man of your own age. And for me, I shall never forget the happiness it has been to know you—and—and—your sister!"

He looked so sad and so in want of a woman to take care of him that Baby Lant, her heart leaping to her throat, clasped her hands and cried, "Oh, *can't* I do anything before you go?"

She stood breathless a long moment, almost panting with that which she had on the tip of her tongue to utter, then it came with a rush:

"You don't care a button about me, I know," she said, hastily, "but would you mind if I kissed you? Would you really mind? It would make me happier. I know you would rather it was Pat—but though it's only me——!"

There was the sigh of the wind among the leaves overhead, a hush like the passing of a good if tricksy spirit. And lo! the little missionary was kissed for the first time since his mother kissed him good-bye at the wayside station, before the train started that bore him collegeward with his bursary.

"Thank you!" he said, gravely, as he stood holding a little trembling hand in his, on the back of which occasional big warm drops were falling.

This was Baby Lant's repentance for her sometime behaviour. She had done what she could.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE LAST RAID OF "BLIND JACOB'S"

"BLIND JACOB'S" did not take its defeat in good part. The Knifer was out of the reach of its aid. He had been reprieved, it is true. But few believed that anything would come out of Mad Mag's last dying words and testimony. Nevertheless, in a little sunk flat near the house called "Davie Dean's Cottage"—of which Scott said that wherever Davie Dean dwelt it was certainly not there—Corn Beef Joe, Daddy Lennox, Fighting Nick Brady, and the young man who was now the brains of the concern, a certain Duffus of the red tie, met to discuss the situation. They could look up at an acute angle and see a patch of sky above them, and far away to the right the gray scarred wall of the Salisbury Craigs. The rest of the house was unoccupied, the windows boarded, but Duffus having speedily improvised a key, the lower portion was theirs for so long a time as the house remained unpulled down. For it was condemned, and Prof. Peter Geddie, the man who has let more light into Edinburgh than a score of Acts of Parliament, was about to build on the site another of his picturesque red-tiled barracks.

In the meantime, and wholly without the concurrence of Professor Geddie, the college staff of "St. Jacob's," driven to their last intrenchments, had rallied here their forces. It was but little time they could venture to spend together, for, except Duffus, who had proved hitherto invisible and un-

graspable, the whole company was under the observation of the police.

The exchequer also, general and personal, was ominously low. Something must be done and that instanter. There was no time to plot revenge on the Kid for his testimony against the Knifer, nor for any recriminations as to the helter-skelter *sauve qui peut* which had disgraced the attempt upon Three Ridings during the night of the fire at the "Peat." They would manage better the next time.

Duffus of the red tie had an idea. At this everyone pricked up his ears. Duffus was worth listening to. There was only one thing against Duffus—he could devise better than anybody, except perhaps the Knifer. Some said that he had a better headpiece than even that hero, whom, being about to die, assembled "St. Jacob's" saluted in raw whisky—whisky such as Billy Earsman would have thrown into the sink. In execution also, there was a finish about Duffus, and his faking of handwriting—well, it was "classy." That was all that could be said. Many thought it was a pity that he did not give himself entirely to that high craft. But something fascinating about locks and levers, the laying of wires on dewy gloaming grass, and long night vigils preparatory to mounting by the banisters to avoid electric bells, fascinated Duffus and kept him on the main, well-trodden road of burglary.

But—are there not spots in the sun? Duffus of the red tie could not be depended on to stand by a comrade. In a time of danger, when Knifer would have been in the forefront—first in the fray, last in flight, his brown neb-cap an oriflamme, Duffus simply was not there at all.

He disappeared—as completely as if he had the capacity, traditionally useful in his calling, of rendering himself invisible. But no "thieves' candle," held in any dead man's hand, could have equalled in marvel the disappearances of Duffus. They were the talk

of all "St. Jacob's." But all the same, they made men a little chary of working with him. If so be the piper were to pay, his comrades knew well that Duffus would not be there to foot the score.

But all the same, they were no children, these grim-featured, close-shaven outlaws of the northern city. There was Daddy Lennox, grown old and almost respectable in crime, who had his preferences as to which wing of the Calton he should be put into, and sometimes condescended to give valuable biographical notes upon the warders, past and present, of Perth Penitentiary. There was Corn Beef Joe, who lacked the Knifer to keep him in order. All were ready to look after themselves, and—if Duffus proved too "slippy"—well, it would be no difficult thing to put a spoke in Duffus's wheel. They conveyed some such warning to the young man, to which, as he could not do without them, Duffus paid heed.

"This is my plan," said Duffus, without taking offence. And at these words there fell a silence that might have been smelt—each man draining his glass of fusel-oil whisky which perfumed the sunk flat, so that a passing inspector of cleaning and lighting sniffed ominously and vowed that these old houses on Dean's Brae, between that and "Gibraltar," must be seen to before long—Professor Geddie or no Professor Geddie.

"Duffus's plan!" was the toast. They composed themselves to listen, and in a fit of abstraction Corn Beef Joe helped himself twice to the whisky, which finished a second bottle neatly.

"Speak up, Duffus!" he said to the young man with the brain and the red tie. "Silence there for Duffus!"

But the veteran Daddy was not to be deceived.

"Hold on," he said. "Joe's not left a sup o' the stuff in the heel of the bottle. Draw another cork, lads, and mind he pays for it!"

No wonder that the passing sanitary inspector

sniffed and vowed that the place must come down. It was, indeed, time.

Then Duffus, after long weighing pros and cons in his mind, at last spoke:

"Three Ridings has been tried, and it ended—well, we know how." He made the movement of a man about whose neck the hangman's rope tightens with a jerk. The fierce faces about him nodded gravely. It might happen to them any day. They made their living on these terms. But not Duffus. He did not mean to die anywhere but in his bed, and *that* he would put off as long as possible.

"Humph," he said, scornfully, "you're brave, I know. And you hold your own lives as cheap as you do that of the man on whom you make a little evening call. But what good is it all, I'd like to know? There's been bungling and bungling—all for the want of a little decent headwork. Three Ridings tried and our best man's head in the noose. Egham Castle, with all the nobby things collected for three hundred years there for the lifting! And all that came of it is—a kid in the reformatory—a kid, too, that has since got off for doing a 'split'!"

"All right, Duffus," said Daddy, "no use grousing and grumbling! We done our best, like them as went before us. And all a gentleman can say is, that we are sorry it isn't better! No use growling at us!"

"Yes, there is," said Duffus, slapping his palm flat on the table. "Three Ridings is now guarded like Edinburgh Castle—lodge tiled, outer and inner guard all complete, and that long Chocktaw Injun they call Hearne Mackenzie with an armoury of guns ready on his hip—a nice thing for a man to meet going upstairs on the outside of the banisters, and his heart thumping pit-a-pat because of the electric wires. No, Three Ridings is not our game—not mine, at any rate. I make a present of it to a better man. But Egham, now—that's the jockey! Egham's the real sausage

and mash. They will think it is safe because it has been tried before, and only for papers, mind you. Then the old fellow never keeps anything but a man-servant or two. He has not even replaced Hammer, the old butler, who used to run everything. All one has to do is just to go in with a bag, fill it at one's leisure, and come away when ready—no shooting, no shrieking maids, no electric traps in such an old-fashioned house—no nothing—port wine, ready decanted, on the sideboard. Help yourself standing—free lunch and side shows—biscuits down below on gold plate, chests of silver plate, not to speak of family jewels. Who wants to stand in with me ? Go where glory calls—Egham or Westminster Abbey ! "

They all would, enthusiastically ; even Corn Beef Joe, though he distrusted Duffus instinctively, as having something back in his head which he of the horse face could not understand. But now, the *coup* certainly seemed of the easiest, as described by Duffus. The red tie's enthusiasm carried all before it. Egham Castle it was to be—Egham Castle and no error !

And Egham Castle, after weeks of spying, it was.

Duffus did the arranging. He watched on the moor till he knew by heart and by the instinct of the born malefactor, all the comings and goings of the neighbours. For instance, in the case of Egham Castle, it was necessary to study also those of Hearne Mackenzie, who, indeed, constituted their greatest peril. For he would ride over at any hour, and if Pat happened to be at Egham with her sister, her lover had been known to ride right round the house after midnight, or sit his horse motionless on the road for half an hour at a stretch, looking at the lights going out one by one in the windows of the bedroom floor.

Duffus, therefore, warned by this unaccountable young man, chose a time when both sisters were down at their father's—at least, they were certainly absent from Egham Castle. And, as Duffus learned from

a too talkative scullery maid, whose parcels he carried to the great white gate from Kingside Station, they were not expected back for another week. The probabilities were, therefore, that Hearne would not be so recklessly ready to risk his horse's legs and his own neck across the deep hags and treacherous slime-pits of Maw Moss.

The night was fixed. The conspirators, four in number, were on the moor at nine of the clock. Duffus indeed, had been there all day. The others, Corn Beef Joe, Daddy Lennox and Fighting Nick Brady had dropped in, more casual-like, descending unobtrusively at Kingside and other adjacent stations, from which they had to walk two or three miles at the most.

This foursome said little. Duffus was in a villainous temper, having had to stay out on the moor all day, and no one having thought to bring him anything except a box of matches for an evening meal. They listened in silence to his tongue for some time, and then, without a word, Corn Beef Joe started up and, going almost on all fours and keeping behind the intersecting ditches and peaty hummocks, he returned in half an hour with half a loaf of bread, some canned meat of his favourite brand, and—a bottle of beer.

"There," he said, truculently. "And now be good enough to stash it! We've had enough of your mouth!"

The twilight began to close in. The band of four, with Duffus now fallen silent and replete, lay watching the lights come out in the great lonely pile of Egham Castle. The whaup sought his dewy couch with his usual long-wailing diminuendo, a lament for the dying day. The pewits, restless and suspicious, circled closer about. Up in the lift a little cloud of plovers, gray and golden, swung and swirled. Stonechats were "*checking*" on every bush. The shadows shifted and lengthened so that a head, injudiciously

elevated, cast the shape of a giant athwart the yellow and gray of the bent.

But the pick of "St. Jacob's" senatus cared for none of these things. Loot, and the excitement of getting it, sufficiently occupied their minds. They were not very anxious, only pleasurably excited. But they listened while Duffus explained to them that all the plate in the world wasn't worth being hanged for. So that, if they were trapped, it was their duty to struggle till the last, to use every wile—but no knives, no pistols! Did they hear that?

The four listened, and after he had finished, Corn Beef Joe felt for his leather sheath, to make sure that he had *his* ready "in case." The hand of Daddy Lennox travelled to his hip—for he was of the old Charles Peace school and still carried a revolver—while Fighting Nick Brady clenched his fist, and thanked his patron saint—Nicholas by name—that his doubled bunches of fives would be sufficient for all practical purposes, even without the American "dusting" contrivance with which in times of stress he could garnish them.

The lights came up here and there in the great dark-gray wall of the castle. There was no regular dinner at Egham Castle when the young ladies were not at home. This Duffus knew, and he explained clearly to his accomplices what would, and as a matter of fact did, happen.

Only a plate or two would go up to the forlorn old pair in the drawing-room. These would be sent down practically untouched. In the hall William and the servants regaled themselves on cold meat, pickles, and stout. That was where the greatest light came from. If you tiptoed near and glanced in, you could see high jinks and listen to the sounds of merriment. The scullery maid had offered to introduce Duffus to the servants' hall—a well-appearing young man, Duffus—as her cousin or brother, whichever he preferred. Then he could have a share of the

fun. But, like a prudent lad, Duffus had declined. Duffus kept business and pleasure distinct and apart. He would see her some day in Princess Street, he said. From this the scullery maid conceived a great opinion of Duffus—so haughty!

Then the lights began to go out. First in the drawing-room. The "atomies" were being conveyed to their room. They were being undressed. Now they were being read to by William and one of the maids, who, having an English accent, had been specially selected for the purpose.

Finally the lights mounted higher. All the lower part of the house—the ground floor, the first and second floors—were in perfect darkness. Above in the attics the servants were retiring. The maids were in the east wing, William and a couple of underlings directly over Mr. Boreham-Egham, so that a bell rope might hang down the wall in a hollow tube into their master's room, and a great green tassel tickle the barren scalp swathed in its close-fitting night cap.

The maids' lights went out promptly. It was half-past ten. William's lingered a little longer, but all was quiet before eleven—everything exactly to a dot as Duffus of the red tie had foretold.

Egham Castle stood out against the sky, a stern and sombre mass, solid as the everlasting hills, apparently uninhabited and uninhabitable. The four out on the moor were, indeed, not susceptible to impressions such as these. But they were glad that the lights were safely out, that there had been no illness, no sending off for doctors, no general movement throughout the castle in search of drugs, such as had sometimes spoiled the best-laid schemes of mice and burglars—as saith the poet.

Duffus advised a wait of a full hour at least, to let the inhabitants effectually settle down. Had they not the night before them, and so on—ten minutes of Duffus's cautious advice, while the men fidgeted

with their tools, and thought over in their minds the several rôles they were to play.

"Now!"

Four shadows moved across the moor as silently as men of the city can over any country place. The Moss of Maw was no joke even in the daytime, and the working kit of four acting professors of the college of "St. Jacob's" makes some noise if it falls. They followed Duffus with care, admonishing each other with brief whispered severity, every time a foot slipped or a jemmy tinkled.

With a sigh of relief they came out upon the great lawn in front of the mansion. The double stairs leading to the front door, being on the Italian model, appeared like a shadowy pyramid built against the front of the house. Here and there on the lawn, scientifically, they began rapidly to put in the pegs, for the wires which were to trip up the pursuers, if any should appear. This was the task of Fighting Nick and Corn Beef Joe—Daddy Lennox being excused on account of his age, and Duffus because he "had a head on his shoulders." Besides he had already done his share in watching.

Duffus of the red tie rubbed his hands and felt himself already the victor. He knew where the Egham strong box was kept. It was an ancient construction. He could have opened it blindfolded. There was no danger anywhere. The other three gathered about him for their final orders. Duffus had begun to speak in a whisper when, suddenly, from room to room of the first floor, a candle began to promenade.

No shadow was cast upon the blinds. No sound was heard. There was no disturbance of the mansion. From skylight to basement, the whole great house was plain mirk, save for this solitary candle, as it were, taking a walk by itself.

Then all at once they remembered that in the evidence of Hearne Mackenzie he declared that he had seen a similar sight on the night when his father

had been found with Knifer Jackson's blade in his throat. He, too, had heard nothing—seen nothing —save only this solitary candle going to and fro in a lone and dreadful house!

Now, such men are exceedingly and necessarily superstitious. Duffus and Daddy Lennox would have turned and fled without inquiry. Fighting Nick Brady stood irresolute, not knowing whether to give the thing up or no. But not so Corn Beef Joe. He had been present at too many failures, and, next to Knifer Jackson, he was counted the most reckless of all the "St. Jacob's" band.

"Whether it is a ghost, or only the old cripple walking in his sleep, let Duffus open the door, and I'll go up and see," said Corn Beef Joe, doggedly. "I'm too near the dollars to go back again without getting my fingers upon them."

But, in spite of his brave words, it took Joe some time before he could bring himself to mount the staircase. The silence of the great house daunted him—the thought, too, of what he might find! Why had young Mackenzie sworn to just such a candle being carried about in the house of Three Ridings?

Corn Beef Joe was not afraid, but though Knifer Jackson's blade was found hafted in the dead lord's neck, every man of them knew that it was never Knifer Jackson who carried that candle!

Who, then, could be the bearer of this one?

It was then that the "man" came out, according as it is placed in each individual. There was something in Corn Beef Joe—cold, cruel, and without bowels, as he was—which yet, by his very lack of imagination, placed him above the others at this juncture. He had "sand."

Duffus, with trembling fingers, undid the little side door. It opened into a passage, in which lingered a faint smell of stale lamp oil and boot polish.

"I suppose," muttered Corn Beef Joe, bitterly,

"whatever happens, I've got to depend on myself! None o' you looks good enough to back me! Ah, if I only had the Knifer here!"

"If it were only a man, Joe" said Fighting Nick, shaking all over, "but a ghost—a spirit—perhaps a hand without any body going about holding a candle!"

"Hands without any body won't do me any harm," said Corn Beef Joe, contemptuously. "I'm going up—now!"

And he went, his knife ready in one hand, halting at each creak of the staircase. With awe in their hearts and a curious dryness in their mouths the three stood back a little, leaving the door open, so as to give Corn Beef Joe a chance. The candle still continued to promenade to and fro steadily, and as it seemed methodically, from room to room. The bearer appeared to be performing an accustomed task, and for a long time the entrance of Corn Beef Joe made no difference.

"He must have seen it by now, eh, Daddy?" said Duffus in a bated whisper.

"Perhaps *It* has struck him dead—I've heard o' such things!" said Daddy, who was nothing if not historical.

"Perhaps worse—mad!" rectified Fighting Nick, who felt that this was no place for him. His biceps would do him small good here.

But still no Corn Beef Joe appeared, and the waiters without began to grow anxious. An hour passed and no Joe! Not a sign in the great silent mansion. Dawn would soon be coming up out of the east from behind the fir trees on the moor, and the three watchers began to grow mightily uneasy. The feeling was vague at first, but continued to increase. Duffus held his watch toward the east, which was just beginning to glow faintly rose.

"We will give him another quarter of an hour," he whispered, and Daddy and Fighting Nick, glad

of the respite, stepped back a little into the shadow of the laurel bushes.

But they had not so long to wait. As it seemed, an army of gamekeepers and foresters rose out of the ground all about them. Fighting Nick got in one or two before he was oppressed by numbers. Duffus attempted to make his usual dash for liberty, but this time all his litheness could not save him. Chisholm, the head keeper, had him safe in "chancery" —most unhappy he was while there! Daddy Lennox tried to entertain the head forester with reminiscences, but was told to "dry-up-and-come-along" all pronounced as one word.

But at this date nothing was heard from Corn Beef Joe, who, the bravest of the brave, had entered the house of Egham to solve the mystery of the wandering candle.

. . . . .

What Head Keeper Chisholm knew about it he related the next day at least fourteen times with various additions and modifications. This, told to the Kingside schoolmaster, is believed to be the earliest and most authentic version:

"I was lying in my bed," said the keeper, "wonderin' if Niagara itsel' could mak' mair noise than Mistress Chisholm—that's my wife—when she lies flat on her back, and, as it were, gies her mind to the snorin'! When a' on a sudden I heard a voice, like a voice frae the deid—'Chisholm—Chisholm!'—it said. An' for a minute I thocht it was auld Hammer comed to send me some errand for the doctor—me no minding that the puir creature was droonded and his body fand tossin' as if it had been cork atween the muckle Bass and the Isle o' May! 'Chisholm—Chisholm!' it cried again. My teeth fair chattered as I lifted the window and looked oot. They micht hae saved their trouble, for no a thing could I see—bena the black tree branches an' a stern or twa glintin' cannily doon through the chinks.

"'Chisholm—Chisholm! You are to rise!' said a voice—the voice o' the deid, sir, and the sweat brak' cauld upon me frae neck to heel. Then strength was given me and I answered as bauld as the minister wi' the Open Buik afore him. 'I'll rise nane till I ken better wha I hae to do wi'!' Me bein' on my feet at the time, an' my sark flappin' ahint me like a flag on the pigeon tower upon the mornin' o' the Queen's birthday. 'Then,' said the voice that was like the voice o' the deid, 'gather all the lads—take weapons—there's a burglar locked in the strong room at the castle, and three others at the cellar door. See and grip them all! If you miss them —then beware—I shall come back!'

"Sae wi' that I gat me up and took my gun ower my shoother. I ran to the bothy to get the lads. And sure enough we grippit three o' the vaigabonds at the cellar door, and the fourth was in the strong room where the papers are keepit! Though what the mischief he was doin' there, and the key turned i' the lock ootside—nane can tell but the voice that spak' to me in at the window o' my ain hoose, and never as muckle as steered the mistress! She snored on—for a' the world like unto Niagara! Oh, it's a fine thing to get the soond sleep! Eh, sirs, aye!

"The lads were a' unkenned to us," continued Chisholm, "but as soon as the chief o' poliss ran his eye ower them, he kenned brawly, for he said, daffin' like, that the hale goodly fellowship o' 'St. Jacob's' was there! Then the auld man, that lookit like a beadle and the captain—I declare if they didna start crackin' aboot hooses that had been robbit thirty years syne, and fowk that were lang hanged, that cosh and friendly-like I was feared he wasna gaun to put him in the goal at a'! But he did, a' richt.

"But the man that was fand lockit up i' the strong room was the maist dazed o' a'. He either couldna or wadna say a word as to how he cam' to be there! But I'll tell ye plain, lads, I dinna want yon voice

frae the deid cryin' at my winnock sole in a hurry again!"

. . . . .

Nevertheless, let it not be doubted, that if the tongue of Corn Beef Joe had been willing to speak that which his eyes had seen, he could have told Chisholm and a few others something very remarkable indeed.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE NEW "B. I. P."

THE one notable effect of the final raid of the forces of "Blind Jacob's" upon the castle was that what little spark of life remained in the poor rickety framework of Mr. Boreham-Egham was frightened away by the events of that night—the stealthy feet, the irruption of armed men, perhaps something else, then altogether unguessed at. The old man was found dead next morning in his bed, without a mark of violence on his poor made-up body, but with his eyes staring steadily in the direction of the curtain which covered the inner door. His companion automaton survived just four days—the great sixty-foot drawing-room having grown too lonesome without that other armchair to wheel opposite to hers. So without more ado Mrs. Boreham-Egham followed her husband to that select corner of heaven where they make you prove four clear descents, all noble, before they let you in. At any rate she died, and Baby Lant, the day after the second funeral, was greeted by Mr. Searle, of Searle & Dalmahoy, W.S., as the unquestioned heiress of Egham Castle and of all the Egham estates.

"You are your own mistress at twenty-one, my dear young lady," said Mr. Searle, affectingly. "I trust you will not find your time of tutelage too hard!"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Searle," answered Baby Lant. "I am my own mistress now—I always have been. And as I shall be twenty-one next week, I shall not give you much additional responsibility!"

"Bless me, do you tell me so?" cried the startled man of law. "We must begin preparing the papers at once. I trust—I trust—I dare say that you are familiar with the long services which our firm, dating back for many generations, has been able to render to the family of Boreham-Egham! I trust that——"

"Oh, I have no intention of interfering—so long as you don't bother me, or try to 'boss' *me*," said Baby Lant. "Besides, I think you are also lawyers for Lord Athabasca?"

"And to his father before him!" said the lawyer, now reassured, and gathering up his papers with smiling ease.

"I *meant* his father," said Miss Atalanta Boreham-Egham. "Of course you might have known that!"

The lawyer, a suave bald-headed man, smiled blandly.

"Am I then to understand that——?" he began. And then hesitated before completing his question.

"Oh, I don't know that it's settled!" said Baby Lant, hurriedly. "Pat declares she won't marry him till it is all cleared up about the murder of his father!"

"But I think it is," said the lawyer. "There need be no difficulty. I have it on the best authority that the reprieve granted to the criminal Jackson is purely nominal, to allow time for the effect of his wife's pretended confession to disappear. There is not the least doubt that the woman lied to save her husband——!"

"So should I!" cried Baby Lant. "That is, if I could find a man worth lying for!"

"You will have the offer of plenty, at least," said the lawyer, bowing again. "Yes, Miss Boreham-Egham, I can promise you that."

"If you think I had not that before, you much deceive yourself!" said Baby Lant, complacently. She could not pretend greatly to regret her uncle and aunt. Indeed, only the huge stone figures of grief over the Boreham-Egham mausoleum in the park

appeared at all affected. They held marble handkerchiefs to their eyes, the same which had been there for a hundred and fifty years, so that even their grief for Philip Egbert and his wife could not be said to be very personal.

But as the lawyer appeared really anxious to be friendly, even apart from the interests of his firm, Baby Lant took him so far into her confidence as to charge him with a very delicate negotiation indeed.

Marthe and her husband would not take a penny of her money. Of that she was well assured. It was necessary to find some way by which they could benefit to something like the extent of their needs. For love's sake Marthe had elected to be poor, but there was no need for her being too poor. She might continue to make her own frocks. Well, nobody wanted her to stop that. She had always done so, and they had always fitted her like her own smooth brown skin.

But an extra servant, a month or five weeks at the seaside for Willie, the baby, and herself—a few such things would make all the difference.

The lawyer wrinkled his brow and thought. Then he put a question. It seemed a curious one, and very far away from the subject in hand.

"Of course there are banks in Kirkmessan," he said. "I believe it is a thriving sort of place with a weekly cattle market, so there are bound to be. Do any of the agents go to—ah—I mean attend your brother-in-law's church?"

"Let me see?" meditated Baby Lant, who was not ecclesiastically minded. "Yes—one of them—Mr. McCallum of the Bank of Scotland. He is, I think, session clerk."

"McCallum—yes, McCallum," meditated Mr. Searle. "Why, the very man. I think he has done some business for us down there. At any rate I can get at him through his general manager, who is a personal friend of mine."

"Oh, Willie and Marthe would not take the money like that!" cried Baby Lant, alarmed, "besides, they would be very hurt to think that I had told anyone that they were poor."

Wary Mr. Searle, who *was* ecclesiastically minded, smiled and waved his hand blandly toward his client. It was not thus that Searle and Dalmahoy, W.S., did business.

"Have no fear, my dear young lady," he said, "I can arrange all that, if you will just leave it to me. I guarantee that neither Mr. Symington nor his wife will know anything about it. They will think it a natural tribute from their appreciative congregation! Did you ever hear of a Local Endowment Scheme?"

"Never!" said Baby Lant, clearly and plainly. He might as well have asked her if she had ever heard of the moon craters by name—Plato, Gassendi, Copernicus and the rest of them—of Goombridge 30, that runaway sun on a tear through space, or of any other of the things which constituted the unknown to the pretty head of Baby Lant.

The lawyer explained at length, somewhat as follows:

In cases where there was a large and thriving congregation—as he understood that of Mr.—ah—Symington was,—the office bearers, including the elders and deacons, were in the habit of adding to their minister's income by forming a Local Endowment Fund, the total proceeds of which went to augment the minister's income.

He (Mr. Searle) might add that he was an office bearer in West St. Shandwick's himself, and he certainly ought to know something about the matter. Let Miss Atalanta—so far had he progressed—leave the affair with him. There would be organised in the Martyrs' Congregation of Kirkmessan such a fund as that of which he had spoken, and by means of the treasurer and session clerk, an anonymous donor—

whose name need never be mentioned—would make the amount up to say £250. For the present he did not recommend more than that, as a larger supplement from a country congregation might cause astonishment and envy.

"All right!" said Baby Lant, cheerfully. "But mind, they are not to know. If they do, I shall have to find another lawyer, that's all!"

But she smiled as she said it.

And Mr. Searle, bowing again, remarked in his suavest tones, "In that case our firm will have the happiness of attending to your affairs for a very lengthened period indeed."

The second use that Baby Lant made of her money was to intimate, always through Messrs. Searle and Dalmahoy, that an anonymous donor had placed the sum of £10,000 in the Bank of Scotland for the purpose of being applied to the needs of the Cowgate Mission, free from all control save the sole will and pleasure of Mr. Archbold Molesay, missionary there.

It came upon the little man like a thunderclap.

To build was a slow process. Oh, if only he had a nucleus! And the Providence which sometimes takes a turn at spoiling the sons of men, arranged that at this very time the great Ogg, Bashan's king, the proprietor of the British Imperial Palace, should fall like Lucifer clear out of the sky of morning.

He awoke one day, rather late, reached out his hand for his "*Thistle*," saw a certain marked downward tendency in a stock in which he was interested far beyond anything that was legitimate in his position. But, as usual, he had the straight tip—that "tip" whose fatal rectilinearity has wrought more ruin than three centuries of fire, shipwreck, and the visitation of God. He hurried downstairs, sent off telegram after telegram telling his broker to hold on—then to buy more—and by the eventide was a ruined man.

The B. I. P. was for sale.

Then a great thought flashed along Mr. Molesay's brain, and flushed his cheek. If only human nature, especially Cowgate human nature, had been just a little better he would have bought the B. I. P.—licence, good-will and all—and made it a model public-house. He thought of himself and Billy Earsman serving out refreshments, in a snowy apron apiece. Then the dance room and little theatre behind—what meetings would they not have there! New combinations, new entertainments—all with the idea of gripping and holding his errant flock and exceedingly prodigal children, followed each other through the little missionary's brain.

But in the morning he saw that it would not do. Things being as they were, a minister of the Nazarene could not hold a public-house. "Temperance refreshments" as a sign-board would be enough to turn every Cowgater from his door. But the buildings—the situation—the many exits! Why, the people would walk in from very force of habit. It was, of course, a valuable property. But Mr. Molesay had several conferences with the lord provost and with Captain Henderland. Strange how things get about! It came to be rumoured that in no case would the licence of the B.I.P. be renewed, now that Ogg—fled the country—was practically no more!

The B. I. P. went to Mr. Archbold Molesay for the very moderate sum of £5,000! He had therefore the same amount left for alterations and new buildings. He would get a good deal more from the sale of his old premises. The missionary could hardly sleep at nights for thinking what he would do. First of all he decided that he would not change the name. It would not be "Christian Institution" or Christian anything. For Mr. Molesay had observed that that word, the noblest adjective in the world, affected even the circulation of journals, and kept the average man away from the doors of halls over which it was carved or gilded. No, the British Imperial Palace it had

been—the British Imperial Palace it should remain, while it and the Cowgate lasted.

But low in his heart Mr. Molesay said, "Not my palace—God forbid, but the palace of One who had nowhere to lay His head!"

Long ere this Ogg was crossing the ocean with a thousand pounds in gold, which he had kept by him for a rainy day, stowed snugly in the corner of his trunk. He did not sleep well, however, lest he should find a detective waiting for him on the tug which brought out the reporters to interview the greatest-and-only-up-to-date sausage manufacturer in the world.

Mr. Molesay, also, did not sleep, wondering what he would do with that last £1,500. There were so many things he wanted—so many things the Cowgate wanted—so many things he could do with the B.I.P.

Also in her pretty first floor Kate Earsman cried all night, with her arm about her husband's neck, while the great fellow gulped and told her not to—at the worst he could always go to the tunnel and do navvying.

Joy cometh in the morning. At least it did that morning for the barman and his wife. It arrived in the shape of a black-coated, disgracefully hatted, well-beloved little man with silvery hair. He found Kate with red eyes frying something extra to tempt Billy to his uneaten breakfast. Billy Earsman had got on very well with Ogg. Ogg had never "tried it on" with Billy. He knew better. And now, all of a sudden, the bottom had dropped out of the big man's world; what was worse, out of his wife's.

"See here, Kate," said the little saviour of society in the Cowgate, "I want you to persuade that man of yours that he can work for me as well as for Ogg. I know he was fond of Ogg. But the British Imperial Palace is mine now, and it will need some handling, I can tell you. I want a big man, strong and willing, with a clean and good-hearted wife to attend to it, and to the people that come to my palace. In fact,

I want Billy Earsman and his wife, Kate! They will have Ogg's house on the third floor, two pounds ten a week, coal and gas. It's not much, I know, but it's as much as I can afford——"

He did not get further, for Kate suddenly flung down the fork with which she was turning the fry in the pan, took three steps toward the little missionary as if she, too, were about to clasp him in her arms. Then suddenly coming to herself, she halted, picked up her morning apron by the corners and sobbed into it. Billy watched her open-mouthed.

"Ye must excuse her," he said at last; "she has been knocked endways wi' thinkin' that it was all up with us—me losin' my place and so on. A' nonsense, of course, for a strong chap and a willin' man can a'ways find work—of a kind. But—you know women, sir."

Little Mr. Molesay was about as ignorant of them as a man can be, yet, though a truthful man, he assented with a smiling nod.

"Well, now then, Billy," he said, suddenly reverting to his original subject, "is it a go? Yes or no? Will you come?"

Billy hung his head.

"If you don't think I'd be a disgrace to the place, sir," he said, slowly spacing out the words. "Some o' them might get askin' for a pint o' beer, and—well, if they gied me ony o' their sauce—I micht be tempted to throw them on the street!"

"I will risk it," said Mr. Molesay. "And for a while, till we get in order, Kate can look after the refreshment department, with a decent lass to help her. Coffee, with bread and butter, a penny. Coffee, milk, bread, butter, and cheese, a good meal—twopence! How's that, Billy?"

"Bless us—and your 'make'—your profit, I mean!" explained the astonished Billy. "Why at that rate you will have hard work to pay your running expenses!"

"All right," said Mr. Molesay, smiling; "I can do it. That is, with Kate to help me, and you, Billy, for doorman and order keeper——"

Here Billy brisked up visibly, all at once looking much happier.

"Keep order?" he inquired, in a changed voice. "Would you be wantin' me to keep order for ye, sir?"

And he actually began to roll up his sleeves on the spot.

"Yes," sighed Mr. Molesay. "You know the Cowgate as well as I do. There is a proportion of chaff among the wheat. The British Imperial Palace shall be open and welcome to all. And I dare say that if even the worst attend and behave themselves, they may be helped of God!"

"And if they do NOT behave themselves," thundered Billy Earsman—late chucker-out at Ogg's—"*then God help them!*"

"Hush, Billy," said the little missionary; "we will try the softer methods first. The fruits of the Spirit, you know, are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance—against such there is no law!"

"They're scarce i' the Coogate, Mr. Molesay, them things," said the ex-barman, "except maybe in your ain lodgings. And the law doesna bother the Coogate muckle, either, sir, askin' your pardon."

"Well, at any rate," continued the happy missionary, "we will have notices for the walls. For the reading room, 'PLEASE DO NOT SPEAK ABOVE A WHISPER.' In the games room, and the bowling alley, and at the billiard and bagatelle tables, there, of course, the men can smoke as much as they want to. But in the general talk and tea room, and where the work-girls may have a little dance, under proper supervision, after shop-closing hours, we will have a big placard, 'PLEASE DO NOT SMOKE HERE,' or something like that, eh, Billy?"

Billy Earsman had been getting more and more

uneasy as the gentle, equal voice proceeded, and the long, slender fingers checked off the programme point by point.

There was evidently going to be too much sugar candy in Mr. Molesay's arrangements to suit the taste of the Cowgate.

"If ye please, sir—*if you* please, sir—no to interrupt ye," Billy broke in at last, though Kate was signaling him entreatingly to be silent. "I hae seen the 'placard-on-the-wall' trick tried afore. It does weel eneuch, but it's like a weakly bairn that canna gang its lane! What care big Rob Paterson or McGaffie the coal cairter—no to speak o' the 'St. Jacob's' boys for tickets on the wall? No *that!*"

And Billy cracked his finger and thumb with a report like a horse-pistol.

"And what would you have me do?" urged the gentle little man. "I cannot use force."

"Do?" cried Billy Earsman. "Just leave a' that to me, sir. Only dinna come flutterin' ben when ye hear a bit noise, that's a'!"

"But what would you do, Billy, if any of the regulations were systematically disregarded?"

"Eh?" said Billy, who did not catch Mr. Molesay's meaning among so many long words.

"If they did not behave as the placards told them," explained the little man, "what steps would you take—what would you do?"

"Do? *Do!*" said Billy, scratching his head. "Weel, juist what me and Ogg wad hae done. I wad gang up to ony blackyard that I saw smokin', and say to him, says I, ceevil-like, 'Can ye read?' 'Aye!' he will say. Then I wad point my finger to the ticket on the waa', and says I, 'For if ye canna I'll read it for ye, "SMOKIN' IS NO ALLOOED HERE!" And if ye dinna pit awa' that pipe ye'll find yoursel' oot on the pavement afore ye can draw three puffs!' That's the way to speak to lads o' the Coogate—kind, but firm! Aye, just that—*kind, but firm!*"

Mr. Molesay laughed a little.

"The firmness I see indeed," he answered, smiling; "the kindness is, perhaps, a little to seek!"

"Na, na," said Billy; "alloo me to ken. It's far the kindest way in the end. Nae poliss, nae smashed windows, nae magistrate i' the mornin'. The thing juist ends where it began—richt there. And when the lad that got the speedy despatch has done sweerin', and rubbin' the gutters aff him, and has pitten on some stickin' plaister here and there, he will come back and ask for his tuppenny supper as saft-spoken as ony o' thae Newington young leddies that collect at the doors for the blind asylum! Believe me, sir, it's the only way to gar your hoose be respected in the Coogate!"

Mr. Molesay started.

"Gracious, man," he cried, "you don't surely expect *me* to take a hand in such work?"

The big barman spread his shoulders and chuckled. Then he looked pleasantly and a trifle pitifully at the missionary.

"Maister Molesay," he said, "I hae heard ye say that there is his ain special wark to every man and every woman on this earth. Yours is to preach the gospel, and tell us how bad we are—but maybes no that bad but what, if we gie ye a chance, ye can mak' a better o' us. That's your business, an' ye are guid for nae ither. Thae fingers o' yours are for playin' 'Oh, where is my Wandering Boy,' on the American organ, or turnin' the leaves o' your wee Bible to look for a text that will nail some puir sowl up against his wrang-doing like a hoolet on the barn waa'! But it tak's the like o' *that*" (and Billy laid a fist of the size and weight of a fore hammer on the table so forcefully that the gentle little man jumped) "to keep the Coogate in order!"

"I hope you will be as forbearing as possible," he said. "Of course, I am aware that order must be maintained. But even you, strong as you are,

could not do everything if mischief were really started."

"Oh," said Billy, cheerfully, "I will no be exactly by my lane! There's Muckle Jock Cockpen, the young smith, that's doin' by ordinar' weel the noo —and in my opeenion, he's maybe a wee bit saft on Kate's sister. I was thinkin' that we wad get her to gie Kate a hand at makkin' the tea an' cuttin' up the bread. She bides oot by Torpheechan way, and is a decent lass. It wad save Jock a fortune in third-class return tickets, if he could come here to see her, and I think him an' me wad be aboot eneuch for the Coogate frae end to end."

"I do cherish a hope," said the missionary, "that we will not need to call in the police. Captain Henderland has been more than kind to me in helping with all the delicate arrangements, so I do not wish to trouble him further."

"Poliss!" said Billy, beating his fist repeatedly on the table, "me and Jock Cockpen will be a' the majesty o' law that you will need in the B. I. P. Forbye, if ye will no misunderstand me, ye will e'en be the best poliss yoursel'."

"Me!" cried the little silver-headed man, completely mystified.

"Aye, juist you," said Billy. "Ye see the palace will be yours. And wild place as the Coogate may be, there are but few that wad dare to stand up and try to mak' a mock o' you or ocht that belonged to ye! He wad get his heid broke faster than ye could crack a nut. Ye see, Maister Molesay, ye are brawly weel likit i' the Coogate, and the man that hairmed you or yours had better be flittin'—aye, and no stop to pick up his bonnet either!"

Hearing this there came a slight moisture into the clear eyes, a kind of gracious film.

Mr. Molesay nodded.

"Well, after all, they are *my* flock—*my* family," he said. "All I am ever to have in this world. But

that they are fond o' me, that they think well of me —I will not deny it—it is pleasant to hear, yes, as the waters of Shiloah that flow softly."

So three hearts were made happier by the visit of the little man with the silver-gray head to Kate Earsman's. Kate felt now that she could live again. Billy was glad that Kate was glad, and as for the city missionary, he felt that he had not lived in vain.

Also a remarkable advance had been made in simplifying the working arrangements of the new and transformed British Imperial Palace. Billy Earsman was in charge of Law and Order.

CHAPTER XXVIII

"I WILL ARISE!"

Now while within the Calton the last sands of the Knifer's appointed span were already swirling toward the last grain, and no fresh reprieve seemed likely to be granted, many strange things were happening outside. It did not seem, however, that any of them bore directly or indirectly on the fate of Knifer Jackson.

For instance there was Egham Castle. In these days Patricia and Baby Lant did not spend very much time there. For one thing it was too near the reformatory, which at first Baby Lant had vaunted as a merit, though Patricia refused to see the matter in that light at all.

"For the present," she said, gravely, "Hearne is far better at work—I also. We will take a house, you and I, for the autumn and winter in Edinburgh. That will clear the board. It will give you time to make Egham habitable—and, a year or so after Hearne's father's death—well, I shall see."

So they took a furnished house in Glencairn Crescent, well out beyond the cathedral, and helped or hindered Mr. Molesay according to their moods —which in the circumstances were naturally various and uncertain. They bought books for the library of the B. I. P.—Baby Lant attending to the department of frivolous literature, and Pat coming out unexpectedly strong on science, travel, history, and instruction generally—with special reference, as was natural in a British Imperial Palace, to the Dominion of Canada.

So one morning as Baby Lant sat looking over catalogues of books removed from Foulis's and Mudie's libraries—for she was a saving little woman—a message was brought to her that some one from Egham Castle wished to see her. "The butler, I think, and he looks frightened," ventured the maid.

"Show him up at once," said Baby Lant, hastily belting her blue gown, and tossing her hair on top of her head.

And William, promoted long ago—trustworthy, dull William—came in, dazed and gray-white, his lips an unhealthy "blae," and his eyes red from want of sleep.

"Why, what in the world is the matter?" cried Baby Lant at sight of him, "you look half-dead."

"And so I am, miss," said William. "I can't stand it—not a day longer. There's something wrong at Egham, something sorely wrong."

"In what way?" demanded Baby Lant. "What should there be wrong? Tell me all about it, William. More burglars?"

"I dunno, miss," he answered, "leastways I think I may say it's not that. There's nothing taken that I can see. Nor can I hear anything—nor has any living person been seen. But the truth is just I can't stop, much as I would wish to."

And the man's trembling lips and shaking hands betrayed the reality of his terror.

"But what can be the matter—nothing seen, nothing heard, nothing missing?"

"Well," said William, as it were driven desperate, "to tell the truth—it's master that walks—leastways his clothes do."

"Nonsense!" said Baby Lant. "Clothes walking! You've got nervous by yourself in that big house, that's all. Have some of the gardeners and foresters in to sleep with you."

"I have had," said William, shaking his head. "I took that liberty—I couldn't have lived else.

But as I am a mortal man there's something, miss —something that isn't good nor wholesome to be near, over at Egham Castle! And I can't stay a day longer —no, not for double wages, miss!"

"Do you mean a ghost?" said Baby Lant, incredulously.

"I don't give the thing a name," said William, recovering himself a little. "No, it's beyond me. But I'll tell you in a word what happens every night. You know master's rooms and those that were Mrs. Boreham-Egham's are all to be changed, and the mess that them masons and plasterers make is just past believing——"

"Well, there's nothing spectral about that," said Baby Lant, beginning to think that she had to do with a lunatic.

"No, miss," continued William, "that's not it. It's because every night master's things are laid out properly on chairs up there, just like they used to be when he was alive. He always was very particular —master was. Wouldn't have his shirt and collar but only in one place, and his wig and pads and back straps each by themselves. And if they didn't just quite please him he would sit and storm in his dressing gown till they was put right. Well, I go up and make sure every night—that is, me and some of the lads with lanterns and pitchforks. There's nothing there but heaps of lime and mortar and bricks—dirt is no name for it, miss. And in the morning we go up again and open the door, and—there's all master's things set out—all proper, as I tell you—everything on its own chair, and the scarlet dressing-gown where he could reach it first thing out of his bed!"

William's voice hastened as he came near the finish, broke, and tumbled to the end in the hurried screech of a chased hen.

Baby Lant could make nothing of it. She had never essayed to plumb such waters before.

"I must speak to Hearne," she said. "Mean-

while go and telegraph—no, stop, I will do it myself—to the head keeper at Egham to have half a dozen men in the castle night and day till we make arrangements."

William stood before her, not offering to retire. Nor indeed had she dismissed him. He was an excellent servant, but he lacked initiative.

"Oh! by the bye, William," said Baby Lant, presently, "you had better stay here to-night. You are in no state to go back to Egham."

"Thank you, madam—no, ma'am," said William. "I don't deny but that I have had a shake. Anybody would have had a shake."

. . . . .

The night upon which William, the butler—afraid to remain in Egham Castle because of a few chairs, symmetrically placed, with clothes neatly folded upon them—remained in Glencairn Crescent, was remarkable also for two other things.

It was the last night Knifer Jackson was to spend on the earth. He knew it, too, because he had noticed that an extra good dinner had been served to him, and that Colonel Crosstrees, the governor, had looked in with a kind word, and to know how he was enjoying it. Also his warders had usually been changed at six o'clock in the evening. That night there had been no change until ten.

The Knifer, a clever man in his way, drew his conclusions. This time, for a certainty, it was to be. The Knifer had some thoughts of sending for Mr. Molesay. But some one of the warders, having told him that the British Imperial Palace was to be opened under new management that night, the Knifer said grimly, "Well, it won't make much difference, anyway, and God forbid that I should cross the luck of the little man!"

The other remarkable thing, the opening of the British Imperial Palace in the most eligible site in

the Cowgate as "Molesay's Mission," was an event practically domestic to the inhabitants of that curious underworld. Up on the North Bridge, even in the Grass Market, the surface of things remained wholly undisturbed. But in the Cowgate and the South Back nothing else was talked about. Everybody was going to the B. I. P.—the good, the bad, and especially the indifferent. It was there that Baby Lant and Patricia, her sister, expected to find Hearne.

That young man, interested in all the doings of Mr. Molesay—and also that he might have a chance of speaking to Patricia—had cycled in from the "Peat" Reformatory, where he had been doing the work of half a dozen men, as Carvel gratefully admitted.

It must be recorded in this place that Mr. Archbold Molesay knew his public. Hardly even the late lamented Ogg, now safely through Castle Garden with his thousand gold sovereigns, had catered for it better during his long tenancy of the B. I. P. There was no great "swell" from a distance on Mr. Molesay's opening night, who would occupy the centre of the platform, and speak for an hour and a quarter till the audience began to get thirsty in a mass. There were only Cowgate folk, the Rev. Harry Rodgers, Dr. Salmond, always wise and kind, Dr. Love from the dispensary, and Hugh Barber, shy and gracious —a dweller in the upper world indeed, but known in the Cowgate for many a year as a son of consolation.

Chiefly and most applauded there was Mr. Molesay himself, gliding from one group to another, inviting all and sundry to the great bar at which Billy Earsman, in the whitest of shirt sleeves, and with a broad grin on his face, served such tea and coffee and soup as had never before been tasted in the Cowgate. There were dishes of pie and brawn, joints of cold beef and cold mutton, bread in half-pound "hunks"—all for nothing, because it was "Mr. Molesay's opening

night." Only, at either end, in a place that it was impossible to overlook, hung two good-will bags, to the weighty contents of which all could contribute, if it were no more than a half-penny, as an easy and practical way of saying good luck to the B. I. P.

The future tariff of the establishment had been made into a series of slides, the favourite of which was a picture of a rabbit in a potato plot, holding up a card between his paws, on which was inscribed "You can have me baked in a pie with these for only 3*d*." The fact that the artist had portrayed the potatoes, which appeared here and there in the furrows, of the size of melons, did not matter. For he had thoughtfully added the legend at the foot. "Mr. Molesay's twopenny rabbit in Mr. Molesay's penny potato field." All of which, taken literally, showed that Mr. Molesay either stole his rabbits or got his potatoes considerably under cost price.

The meeting proper began at eight o'clock, the hour when, up in the condemned cell, the Knifer was holding debate with himself whether he would or would not send for Mr. Archbold Molesay.

Now, as we know, Mr. Molesay was broad-minded. He knew very well that he could not address the waifs and strays, men and women mostly settled on the lees of their misery, and sodden with poverty to the point of callousness, except in the clearest and crispest way. "*Sin had brought condemnation; from which only God, the forgiver of sin, could deliver. For Christ's sake. Amen.*"

This, in his mission room, was his complete gospel. He could dispute with his friend Harry Rodgers, till the hours grew small, and Mrs. Rodgers came to the head of the stairs to ask him if he meant to take breakfast with them, about the fundamental difficulties of every thoughtful man, and the impossibility of holding any hard and fast dogmatic.

"You cannot hitch on the God within us to the

God who made Heaven and Earth by means of a printed book," he was wont to say at such times. This was his closet doctrine, which he kept to himself or for one or two intimates.

But on the platform he spoke as one having authority. Addresses delivered there were brief and to the point. The Rev. Harry Rodgers shook that hardened company of backsliders with the terrors of a broken Law and of an angry Judge. Little Mr. Molesay shifted uneasily as his friend was speaking, but he added nothing at the time, knowing what was coming later.

Then Dr. Love spoke healingly of the doctors and nurses, who in such a place as this Cowgate of theirs, went about doing good, cheerfully, kindly, asking neither fee nor reward.

"Can God, who *is* love, be less kind than these men and women whom He has made? I cannot believe it."

Upon which Mr. Molesay breathed again and whispered to his friend by his side, "Rodgers, you are one of them. More than half your dinner goes from your back door every day. And as for topcoats, your wife was telling me the other day——"

"Shut up!" said the Reverend Harry, with the scandalised abruptness of a college friend.

The great hall, which had been the dancing saloon of the B. I. P., was crowded to the door. The little bar in the corner, at which on big nights, Billy had stood in state, contained Billy still. But a Billy no longer in shirt sleeves. At the meeting he had demanded that Jock Cockpen and he should be allowed to put on their Sunday coats decently. Otherwise he threatened a strike. So, dearly as the quaint convolution of little Mr. Molesay's brain, which loved the bizarre, would have liked to see Billy as of yore in shirt sleeves in the corner, he knew that it was for the good of the B. I. P. under its new management that he should take Billy's advice. So, from the

platform, and round the corner of the big twenty-foot wetted screen on which the lantern pictures would presently flash out, Mr. Molesay could see his Gog and Magog on either side of the porch, arms folded, countenance imperturbable, the whole responsibility of the gathering obviously resting upon them.

Indeed, it was nothing less than the salvation of Billy the bully and Jock Cockpen. They had found something to do—something definite, concrete, requiring enthusiasm, patience, concentration. They were doorkeepers in the house of their God. And Satan, whose business, according to good authority, is the providing of occupation for idle hands, had no more power over them.

Then came Mr. Molesay, and at the sight of him a wave of enthusiastic emotion filled that great assembly of those who inhabit the streets and lanes of the deepest city. He stood trying to say that he was glad to see them, but he had to say it with his hand, as cheer after cheer swept thunderous up to the roof of varnished pine, and made even the gas fittings dirl and sing. Gust followed gust, as the little man stood before those who were peculiarly his flock —that is, those who were nobody else's flock. Cheer pushed on cheer, in one continuous roar, till Mr. Rodgers and Dr. Love smiled across at each other, watching the deprecating, feeble lifting of that little white hand.

Mr. Archbold Molesay's lips moved, though nobody heard what he said. He was explaining to himself that this great welcome was not his, but was meant for his Master. And if he had made any soul think better of Him—why, what had he to say against that? God forbid!

"My friends," he began, his voice, silvern like his hair, easily reaching every part of the room and making the twin pillars of Hercules—Billy and Jock Cockpen —firm themselves on their legs and fold their arms tighter, "my steadfast friends, this is a night of joy

to me—to see you here—here in this place which is ours—ours by the gift of a certain gracious young lady——"

At this moment Pat and Baby Lant appeared, and without ostentation moved from the side door by which they had entered—one of many—to places which were made for them in a moment just beneath the platform.

"That's her!" whispered the assembled Cowgate. "Her that gied the siller to buy Ogg's Pailace wi'!"

"What yin? What yin?"

But there was a division concerning this matter. Pat, however, was distinctly the favourite. She had lived among them—at the manse—Rodgers's. See, the minister's wife was speaking to her. At any rate, three cheers for her—three cheers, and three cheers for her sister, who was "sic a bonnie young leddy!" For the Cowgate is as susceptible to beauty as any other part of the civilised world.

By this time the slender-fingered white hand had prevailed. Silence was made, so sudden that there seemed to be a void somewhere in space. Ears still rang with the shouting. But in the great hall of the late Ogg the stillness could be felt.

"I have prepared no address of welcome," he said. "You know that I am glad to see you here. It is your house and God's house—where you and He shall meet together. After a short prayer I have some very fine new pictures illustrating the parable of the Prodigal Son which I am going to show to you. There will also be singing."

Mr. Molesay prayed. There was always a quaver in his voice when he did that, something that approached the tremolo of a violoncello string that slips a little in the night and the darkness—nothing of the Boanerges or silver trumpet about the little city missionary. He drew men's hearts because he himself was near to the heart of God. That was all.

The prayer pleaded for sinners, that is for himself and all there present—for the great sinners, of whom he was the chief—or at least the one he knew best, for the poor man "up yonder!" Here a lift of the hand before the closed eyes indicated where Knifer Jackson awaited the morrow.

At that there came a sob from among the audience somewhere. From a dark corner, out of the burdened breast of some one unseen, broke the answering moan, which was a prayer.

Now, to conduct lantern services is not so simple as it looks. "A few remarks about the pictures" will not do. No more will a sermon with pauses for the flashing on of disconnected scenes which only distract the attention of the audience. Hand-coloured pictures only and these of the finest. That is "the tip." Above all, there must be a man, a first-class professional, or an amateur fully equal to a professional, at the lantern. There must be no mistakes. At a pathetic moment it is absolutely fatal if the Prodigal Son comes in serenely sixteen feet high and—upside down!

But Mr. Molesay had no fears. All would go well. For was not Charlie Haddon, the best man in Edinburgh, behind the lens. It was yet in the early days of lanterns, and audiences were not surfeited with them. At least Cowgate audiences were not—and certainly not with slides like those of Mr. Brown, evangelist enthusiast of lantern photography. Such slides as his could not be bought, and as Haddon flashed each upon the screen Mr. Brown stood at his elbow, and his heart beat fast, half with good-will for the cause, and half with a kind of motherly fear that he might see the fatal spreading crack which tells that the heat has been too great at the condenser.

The little missionary held up both hands. The gas was lowered.

There was a hush, deeper than all that had gone before, as the Prodigal Son was seen leaving his father's

house, the desert spreading wide and tawny all about him, his footsteps making blue stains on the white glare of the sand, and on his back, reduced to its ultimate bulk in gold or jewels, the "portion of goods that pertained to him."

Then unseen, and very softly, the choir sang:

"I was a wandering sheep—I did not love the fold!"

Mr. Molesay said little in guise of comment. But he had a way of saying that little impressively. In substance, this:

The trackless desert was still as of old before everyone. At the setting out there were no beaten roads to follow. The blown sand had drifted over them. Each must make his own road. Above were the stars, and God—so they said, at least—as for him, he, Archbold Molesay, knew that within was the inner light, at once compass and chart—the Kingdom of God is within you!

Then flashed on the great wet screen set in bamboo, the Cowgate folk saw glimpses of the far land and the poor young fellow wasting his substance. That affected them less. People with money to spend in riotous living did not visit the Cowgate to do it—that is, unless they were of native extraction. And with the common broad way of destruction, open to all and hard trodden day by day, night after night, they were familiar enough.

The men all said, "What a young fool!"

And the women, "Eh, what a peety—for he is the bonnie laddie, too!"

The swine trough touched them more closely. There was the prodigal, seated at a dike-back (as it seemed), the herds of the unclean beasts about him, feeding out of full troughs, shouldering and trampling. Famine had bitten sore on the land. Pride had had a fall. But no man gave unto him.

"Aye, he's gye and vexed for't noo, I'm thinkin'!" said the men, with a nudge, as if they had told him

how it would be, before he went among such company as he had been keeping of late.

"Oh, it's a peety—it's a peety!" sobbed the women. "The puir young laddie—sae bonnie—and hungry! Oh, wae's me!"

It was a good lantern fitted with double-dissolving gear. Back in the glancing darkness where the oxygen hissed low on the limes, Haddon changed a slide, under the anxious eyes of Mr. William Brown, its owner, who trembled for its safety while assured of its success.

On the screen the prodigal scarce seemed to change his position, but he was looking up now. There was a strange, rapt look on his face.

Then from the darkness behind the screen a single voice was lifted up, a woman's thrilling contralto, with notes in it that throbbed like a great organ touched by a master.

"I . . . will arise . . . and go . . . to my father,
And will say unto him . . . 'I have sinnéd . . . sinnéd . . .
And am . . . no more worthy . . . to be calléd . . . thy son!'"

Perhaps it was a trick. At any rate it would not bear doing twice. For as the marvellous tones beat upward through the hush, the withdrawing hush of the dark hall, something clicked in the lantern. The keen light changed its pitch momentarily, and lo! dimly they could see the prodigal on his feet. He had arisen and was going—going—back to his father!

"I have sinnéd . . . I have sinnéd . . . and am no more worthy . . . "

throbbed the voice. And then there was silence and here and there the muffled sound of sobbing.

These were drowned in a kind of murmur half-hum, half-whisper, all abroad over the great

audience, as if it were going from bench to bench. And then came the voice of Mr. Molesay:

"It is never too late to go to the Father. If any have sin—arise—go! HE is waiting! HE will forgive! Doubt it not!"

And like an echo a woman's voice answered him:

"I will—I will!" she cried. "I will hide the sin no longer. The innocent shall not die for the guilty. Mr. Molesay, sir, go and stop them, I pray you. Do not let them hang an innocent man to-morrow morning, and so lose my poor soul—and his—and *his!*"

The lights had not been turned up, and there was a sound of blind, stumbling footsteps. A little woman was staggeringly making her way to the front.

Billy and Jock turned up the lights, and Billy started forward. But it was no disturbance—no row. Only a little, trembling, frightened woman, the mere withered kale-stock of a woman, was clinging to Mr. Molesay's arm. He was saying something low in her ear.

"No!" she cried. "I will not go to another room. I have gone far astray. I am punished. But I take your word for it—I will hold you to it before the Bar—before the Bar—that there is forgiveness for him and me. I will tell in public, before all these, what I have done—what he has done. And then they will not hang the man Knifer Jackson, who came to steal, indeed, but who is no murderer!"

Then it came with a rush.

"Lord Athabasca was found dead in his chair!" she cried, "with the Knifer's blade in his throat. But it was my poor husband who, in a fit of madness, drove the knife to the haft!"

It was Marigh Hammer who spoke!

CHAPTER XXIX

THE CONDEMNED CELL

In this wise the B. I. P. began its work. What matter, if the meeting broke up in some confusion? Already it had saved a life—perhaps a soul. At any rate the Cowgate did not wait for explanations or details. In a few minutes some of the more active of the audience, those nearest the door, were battering on the great gates of the Calton prison. From within they could hear the hollow strokes of the mallet and the sharper tapping of the hammers as the scaffold went up to be ready for eight o'clock of the morning.

"We will save the Knifer! We will save the Knifer!" shouted the crowd in a Babel of cries; some hoarse, some shrill.

But the governor could do nothing, though the crowd increased, even alarmingly. Not a few thought that it was only another false confession to save the man's precious neck—like that which already had won him six weeks of wretched life.

At the British Imperial Palace no one waited for the benediction, as Billy and Jock Cockpen *shooed* the audience out like so much intrusive poultry. They had gotten their lesson. The mission was vindicated. Now let them go home. Wiser heads than theirs had the matter in hand.

Already Mr. Molesay, Dr. Love, and Mr. Rodgers were on their way to the chief of police, with poor, trembling Marigh Hammer, in a hastily summoned cab. Captain Henderland would tell them what to do.

"I will fetch the lord advocate," he said, with his quick emphatic grasp of detail. "It's a God's blessing I know where he is dining to-night! He shall come if I have to arrest him! Thomson" (he spoke to an inspector hastily), "go down to the telegraph office, and call up the Home Office. Find out where the Secretary is. We may need a word from him later in the night."

So it came to pass that poor, quaking Marigh, her mouth overflowing with the pitiful words in which she strove to vent the secret that had nearly killed her, told her tale in quick gasps. Hearne Mackenzie had come in, after a hasty word with Patricia and Atalanta. In a night so full of wondrous things William's strange communication had not been forgotten.

Curiously enough, after Hearne came in, Marigh Hammer would address no one else, not though a quiet, gray, keen-featured man, in evening dress, had entered and seated himself at the table like any casual stranger. It was the lord advocate himself.

"Sir," said Marigh, looking at Hearne, "God knows we sinned, Algernon and I, but we were punished and that grievous. But it was your father that offered us the £10,000 if we could bring about his marriage with Miss Patricia. Yes, it was; we had not thought of so much money. And she would have done it, too, but for you. You came and stole her from us. My husband went to the bank to be paid the money that was his. On the way he was caught and kept in a coalpit or tunnel—he was never able to tell me rightly how or where."

"I had nothing to do with that!" said Hearne, sternly for him.

The chief waved his hand as much as to say, "Let her talk—do not stop the current—we are doing finely!"

Marigh continued in the same dry throat voice:

"Then, when he went to the bank, they told him that the cheque had been stopped hours before, and

my poor Algernon fell stunned to the floor. They took him to the hospital, but he never was himself again. His mind was gone. He could say nothing but—'Ten Thousand Pounds—Ten Thousand Pounds! It is mine! My old master would not have treated me so.'

"Then he went out to drown himself, but being taken by a different thought, he turned back to get his rightful money from Lord Athabasca in his house of Three Ridings."

"But his body was found out in the Firth?" suggested the chief in a low tone.

"It was not his—some sailor man," said Marigh—"not the least like my poor Algernon. He was that handsome, and had the most beautiful whiskers, though they cut them off, they did in the tunnel. He went to Three Ridings to see my lord and to get his money. It was the night of the fire. And there were burglars there. He scared them, I think, walking proudly up the stairs as if they were his own. They ran, believing that he had an army of police behind him. Then one of them must needs drop a knife, and Algernon, meaning no evil, took it in his hand.

"Yes, he went in to my Lord Athabasca with the cheque in one hand and the knife in the other. So much he told me.

"'Pay me what is mine!' he said—or so, at least, he kept saying afterwards. And my lord laughed—only laughed. He did foolishly to laugh at a desperate man with a knife in his hand. Algernon struck him where he sat. And that was how you, Mr. Hearne, found what you did on the night of the fire!"

Marigh fumbled a moment and produced a folded oblong of paper stained with rusty finger marks.

"There is the cheque, sir," she said, handing it across to Hearne. "It was for that bit o' paper that your father lost his life—and my husband his reason!"

"And where is he now, your husband?" said the chief, quickly.

Instantly Marigh gave a quick, semi-circular glance at all the company in order. For the first time the importance of the little, quiet, gray man in the evening coat seemed to strike her.

"If I tell you," she said, advancing a little, "you will give me your word—you will not hang him. He is mad! My poor man!"

"If he is mad," said the stranger in the evening clothes, "I give you my word. He shall not be punished."

"Who are you?" demanded Marigh, sharply.

The chief answered for *his* chief.

"This is the lord advocate for Scotland," he said, quietly.

"Very well," said Marigh, "it will be better for my poor Algernon to be taken care of at once. You see he might do more mischief without in the least meaning it. He was stricken mad when they threw the paper back at him in the bank. He stayed with me for weeks and weeks, all quiet, in a little house down near Queen Mary's Bath at Holyrood. And oh, I used to take him for walks in the park, and up the side of Arthur's Seat in the gloaming! No one would have known him. But I could not keep him—not when he heard that his old master was dead.

"'That is a lie,' Algernon said to me. 'He only has that reported so that I may go back and look out his things for him. No one could do for Mr. Philip Egbert like Hammer. He just wants me back and I am going!'

"So he went without more ado, leaving me there standing on the street, just where the thought had come to him. And, gentlemen, *he is there now*—at Egham Castle! And the burden has grown more than I can bear—the fear that he might strike another in his madness as he did my Lord Athabasca!"

They removed her, to be cared for tenderly. The

advocate sent his message to the Home Secretary. The Secretary replied. And about the Calton the noise of hammer and mallet ceased as if by magic.

And while the chief and Hearne, with half a dozen stalwart men of the force, mounted and rode through the night toward Egham, it was decided that no one in the world but Mr. Archbold Molesay had the right to go in and break the news to Knifer Jackson. The governor, kindly man, insisted upon this when he heard the account of the confession at the opening of the B. I. P.

So Mr. Molesay went.

The warder from without noiselessly undid the door.

Within the cell of the doomed Knifer there was silence. The two watchers within were on the alert —one read while the other gazed trancedly into the flicker of the naked gas jet on the whitewashed wall. Knifer Jackson had lain down on his bed and pulled his prison rug high about him, bringing the corner over so that it covered his face. He comprehended that it was the end.

The dreadful hammering outside was present to all his senses. That was the worst of it. If suddenly and without warning he had been summoned to walk out upon the drop, Knifer could have done it unflinchingly. It was the waiting that told, and the dull thudding of the gibbet builders without. Sometimes Knifer thought that the sound was in his own head —sometimes that he was in the shipbuilding yard where as a boy he had been allowed to sleep by a kindly watchman. It was good there—he smelled the shavings yet. He smelled them now from the yard without. Strange! He wondered why they should need shavings for such a big thing as a gallows to hang a man upon. Something wrong with the trap, perhaps. They would be planing that down.

Then he remembered Daddy Lennox telling him that it was the original master and model of "Blind

Jacob's," a certain Deacon Brodie, who had first perfected the drop. They had made them step off a ladder before that. The Knifer was sure that he could have devised something better than a drop if only they had given him a little time and the proper tools. He was not very angry, nor very remorseful, nor very curious—nor very anything. He had played and he had lost. There you are!

A simple philosophy, but it had seen the Knifer through life.

He heard the hither and thither of footsteps before his door. Presently one of the warders was summoned outside to whisper a moment.

"No, he is not asleep!" he heard him say.

He knew that it was the governor's voice, as much by the deference of the warder as by the short, soldierly grunt of questioning. Then there sprang up the fragment of some ancient childish lesson—the Knifer had not the least idea that it was one well known to all the world.

"'Suffered under Pontius Pilate'!" he murmured to himself. "Well, I don't deserve it—this time, at any rate—and perhaps they will give me an easier berth on that account—where I am going!"

He heard a slight scuffling behind him, and turning saw the two watchers go out. Then little Mr. Molesay came in, a sort of divine gentleness in his eyes.

"Hello!" said the Knifer, not unkindly, but with a sort of surprise, "I didn't send for you. I thought you would be down at your new palace—yours and Billy's. It surely cannot be . . . time yet——"

He faltered slightly and repeated—"Not time yet, surely?" a little anxiously. The Knifer had risen with the prison blanket still about him. He sat on the edge of his cot. With his eyes he indicated the single chair to Mr. Molesay. The Knifer was polite to the last—at least to Mr. Molesay. But he waited for him to speak his message without caring what it was. Wonder was dead. It died with hope.

"You are not guilty of this," said Mr. Molesay at length. "Why did you not protest more vehemently?"

"I told them. They would not believe me," said Knifer Jackson, "why should they? My knife was found in the man's throat! He was a lord."

"Yes, but you know very well that *you* did not put it there!" remonstrated little Mr. Molesay, his eyes shining.

The Knifer glanced at the crack of the door. It was quite shut. Then he nodded.

"I would give a lot to know who did put it there!" said the Knifer, with his first flash of interest.

"I can tell you," put in Mr. Molesay. "A just God has brought the murder to light!"

"Ah!" said the Knifer, with a catch of his breath, and a dawning suspicion. "And they sent you to tell me? They are not going to hang me" (here his voice mounted higher), "but they will give me penal servitude for life. I do not want that. I have had enough. I have passed the bitterness. My mind is made up to die—I will not go back on it now!"

Then very slowly, as if doling out nourishment to a starving man, Mr. Molesay told him the story of Algernon Hammer, how his wife had confessed, how Hearne Mackenzie, the dead man's son, Captain Henderland, and six picked men were even now speeding to the capture of the poor mad ex-controller of Egham!

"But—but," gasped the Knifer, his mouth suddenly dry as bone, "I will not be shut up for life—rather than that I will stick to it—and demand that they shall go on! It is my right. No commuting to a 'lifer'—I prefer to die!"

Then Mr. Molesay undoubtedly went a little beyond his mission.

"Don't tell him," the lord advocate had said, "that there will be a pardon. I have no doubt it meant burglary, at least. But then the poor creature

has suffered enough—two deaths, certainly. The reprieve is here. I have no doubt at all but that the pardon will follow ! "

Mr. Molesay, for the first time in his life, broke his plighted word—or, rather, as the French say, passed outside it. He told Knifer that a free pardon was undoubtedly coming to him in consideration of his sufferings.

The Knifer turned pale and then red and then back to pale again. He jerked his finger in the direction of the prison yard.

"*They are taking down . . . that thing?*" he whispered hoarsely.

He meant the gallows, which had been prepared for its function at eight of the morning.

"It is gone—passed—there is an end ! " said little Mr. Molesay, taking hold of the strong-lined, muscular hand of the Knifer with both of his. And for a while the city missionary talked low and quiet with the man for whom death had opened its jaws—into whose eyes eternity had looked. What he said is no one's business save that of these two.

"You are a good man ! " said Knifer, answering him aloud. "But what am I to do ? I have stolen all my life. If I were to turn pious now, everyone would laugh ! Besides, I should starve ! "

"It strikes me that there will not be many to laugh when you get out," smiled Mr. Molesay. "The 'Blind Jacob's' lads are mostly neighbours of yours here—or at Perth."

"What ! " cried the Knifer. "So they tried another job without me, did they ? Who were they ? "

"Corn Beef Joe, Daddy Lennox, Fighting Nick, and Duffus—they tried Egham, got frightened with something they saw—now we can guess what—a dead man arranging neckcloths and brushing trousers ! So they were taken like so many sheep ! "

The Knifer laughed a little, and was the better for it.

"And poor Mag!" he said, more quietly.

"She died trying to save you," said the little missionary. "In some ways you owe her your life—at least your first reprieve. Otherwise all this would have come out too late to do you any good in this world!"

"Poor Mag!" said the Knifer, putting his hand to his brow.

"Now, as to yourself, Jackson," the missionary went on. "Mr. Hearne will set you down in a new country where you can begin afresh, where you will be as good as any man——"

"It *might* come over me again," said the Knifer sadly. "You see I have been at it a long time. I would not like to disgrace you or Mr. Hearne."

"There will not be a locked door nor a sixpenceworth for the taking within a hundred miles!" Mr. Molesay assured him. "You can do smithwork, woodwork—you have the ready hand that can turn itself to anything. You will climb to the top of the tree like a man going up a ladder!"

"And the Kid?" asked the Knifer, suddenly.

"Lord Athabasca—that is—Mr. Hearne is bent on giving him a good education," said Mr. Molesay; "he is to learn mining engineering. Some day you may have him out there for a comrade—if you are lucky, Jackson."

"For a boss!" said the Knifer, more clear-sightedly.

Mr. Molesay nodded approval, and left, only telling Jackson that he would get news when he was to be set at liberty, and that then he must come straight to his house. Indeed, he (Mr. Molesay) would endeavour to be in waiting for him at the prison gates. After that they would go to Three Ridings and see Mr. Hearne.

At this the face of the Knifer fell. And the little missionary remembered what was the last time he had been there.

"Well, then," he hastened to add, "to Egham

Castle—after this business is over, I mean. Mr. Hearne is about as much at one as at the other just now!"

The little silver-headed man took his way down from the Calton leaving the prisoner a prisoner still. But the bitterness of death was past. The Knifer's mind was full of a new world, a new life. He was not an imaginative man, Knifer Jackson, and he could not yet conjure up the life in those far pine woods and beside those rushing waters. He only knew that, God (and Mr. Molesay) helping him, the future should not copy the past for one Andrew Jackson, sometime called the Knifer, who was destined, in a logging camp on the Kootenay, to keep alight a blacksmith's forge, and to set a saw, or shoe a horse, or put an edge on an axe with any man.

CHAPTER XXX

"IT IS WELL!"

BUT now we must follow the track of the chief of police, who rode a little behind Hearne, and that of the six tall policemen, who rode at a proper distance behind their superiors. What with his trials, his reprieves, and his weary waitings, the Knifer had been eight good months in the Calton, and now again the roads were as iron beneath the horses' shod feet as these men rode to save him. The frost bit keen, and it took the men all their time to keep warm. It is a rise of something like a thousand feet from the level of Edinburgh town to the broad plateau of Maw Moss, and it seemed to the riders to count about the same number of degrees of cold.

"Surely we can't be far from the north pole now," growled Captain Henderland, slapping his thighs with his gloved fingers, just a few minutes before the dark quadrangle of buildings, which was the Castle of Egham, hove into sight.

All was black, silent, and deserted. The telegram which Baby Lant had sent at the instigation of Mr. William, the butler, had apparently remained without effect. The gardeners and foresters had had enough of Egham Castle at present. The party from Edinburgh could not even get into the stable, so Captain Henderland motioned one of his men forward.

"We generally keep an officer in the force who is learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," he said. "It's not strictly provided for in the regulations,

but a little cross work is necessary to our job sometimes, so as not to get left too far behind by the professionals."

Then very swiftly, after a little tinkering, but no fumbling, the policeman had the door of the stable open, and soon the horses were placed in comfort that bitter night.

"It looks as if we would have to share their hay," said Hearne, glancing up at the long row of black windows. But the chief knew better.

"We can get in yonder," he said, jerking his thumb in the direction of Egham Castle. "I know houses under repair. There is always a heap of sand or of bricks under an unhasped window, generally in the proximity of the kitchen!"

And the chief guessed rightly. Even so, by such a window did the eight men penetrate the darksome, half underground kitchen flat of Egham Castle.

"Now, your lantern—quick!" said the chief, addressing the policeman who had opened the stable door.

By a slight further infraction of Baby Lant's property, and upon Hearne's volunteering to stand good for the damage, the chief and he obtained creature comforts for the cold and wearied men. As they were partaking of these, there came, clear and manifest from above, the shuffling tread of a foot. Then a cough—yes, of all things in the world—a cough.

I think there was no one among them who did not quail, at that dead hour, in that dead house, and . . . with a dead man trailing his white-wrapped limbs tardily above looking for a scarlet dressing gown.

Of course they did not believe in ghosts—not a man of them. It must be Hammer, they knew that. But still, they had no objections to the other fellow going first. Finally the chief, as became his office, snatched the lantern, and made for the staircase which led from the kitchens to the hall and from

that again to the rooms of the late Mr. Boreham-Egham. The rest followed as it happened.

But when they had mounted the staircase, which, in spite of the "*Hsssshs*" of the chief and the Indian craft of Hearne, they achieved with the noise of a regiment at a charge—lo! they went stumbling over mounds of sand; they overturned neat parallelograms of fire bricks; they tore down flapping banners of wall paper damp and in disarray.

Then the lantern flashed all about the rooms. Nothing! They found no soul—not the sign of a living creature, nor spirit self-manifested, nor watching ghost—nothing either to put in handcuffs or to lay with curse ecclesiastic.

Then they looked at each other, a little foolishly, it must be said.

"I could have sworn," began Hearne.

"I do swear," said the chief, who was a trifle peppery when provoked, "I heard footsteps, and if we catch the rascal who is making a fool of us—well——!"

He did not finish his sentence, but much was left to be inferred.

Again there was an uncomfortable pause.

"And that woman's yarn?" murmured the chief. "After all, was it another plant? Could she be lying like the other, to save the Knifer's neck? What will the lord advocate say, and the Secretary? And I . . . took it all upon myself! What a fool!"

He groaned, that brave, authoritative chief of police. His reputation for judgment meant a great deal to him.

"The light is coming," said Hearne. "Let us go through the house."

They did go through the house accordingly. Save in the rooms where the workmen were actually repartitioning, plastering, fitting grates, and so on, everything was undisturbed—indeed, in perfect order. Not a trace of Algernon Hammer did they find. Not a bed had been slept in. Not a chest of drawers

was unlocked. Mystery, deep and solid, insoluble by any known process of chemistry, played upon Egham.

The fear of Mr. William, the butler, and the absence of the servants who had been ordered to watch—these things did not go well with the theory of trickery. And then there was the strange dragging noise overhead which they had all heard.

As the morning gray turned yellowish before the winter sun, Hearne went and threw open the great door. He ran down the broad, monumental, Palladian steps.

"What's he muddling about among the gravel for?" asked one of the men.

"Can't say, I'm sure," answered his fellow, on whose temper the night rigours had told. "Got a crack, they say. His mother was a Red Indian!"

"Ummm!" growled the other. "Then he may find something. I wish to gracious he would. This is no sort of work for men—standing about in this teeth-chattering funeral vault. And the chief, too! Lor', what will they say in Glasgow? What will the Secretary say if they have to let Knifer off after all and we can't prove nothing against anyone else?"

"Well," muttered the first speaker, "I wouldn't be in the chief's shoes for—ah, what's that? That chap out there is holding up his hand. He has found something!"

They rushed down the steps to the wide sweep of gravel in front of the main entrance of Egham. Hearne had nothing more mysterious than the brass castor of a bedroom chair in his hand. It did not seem much to them. But Hearne had an idea.

"Follow me," he said, "and for the Lord's sake—softly!"

"Take off those boots!" commanded the chief; "off with them this minute!"

And as the men grimaced at the lumpy, frosty gravel, he set them the example. Hearne did not

take off his, an exemption which the men did not think fair. But the chief only said, "He doesn't need to. He walks like a cat!" And with a sweep of his hand drew the six officers close in behind him.

Hearne took a careful line across the gravel. Two slight scratches parallel and occasional, as if something heavy had been sometimes dragged, sometimes carried, guided him. Then he came to a place where two paths divided, and hesitated a little. The men rubbed their stockings plaintively one over the other, and thought that the lot of a policeman was not, indeed, a happy one. But the interest of the only great chase—the chase of man—held them.

They became interested, too, in Hearne's doings, which were curious. He laid his ear to the ground, and rose, shaking his head. Then he saw a twig which, budded by a too mild autumn, pushed on by the November rains, and nipped by the frost, had now been bruised but not broken off completely. The bud was crushed, but the fibres of the twig being tough, it was slowly returning to its own place.

Something had passed that way during the night —perhaps more than once. But the ground was too hard for any marking of footsteps.

Still, his dark, subtle eyes turning from side to side without his head turning with them, Hearne followed the trail, and the bootless policemen came after, resolved to slay him if all this came to nothing. The chief, too, was interested, but prepared to be very angry.

The path ended abruptly in front of the Boreham-Egham mausoleum!

Hearne broke into a little cantering trot like that of his grandfather (on the mother's side) when upon the trail of a doomed Assiniboine. The sun, ruddy and sulky through the mists of frost, glinted level through the trees. Among its dark yews the door of the great family mausoleum stood slightly ajar. Hearne pushed it open, stared a moment, gave a

slight cry, and entered. The chief followed. The men crowded about the entrance. This is what they saw:

Mr. Algernon Hammer, dressed perfectly, just as he used to be in his days as controller of Egham Castle, was seated on a chair at the foot of the marble monument of his dead master.

On a couple of chairs at either side was arranged all that was necessary for his master's uprising. The clothes were neatly folded. The scarlet dressing gown was in its place—the pads and straps and braces. Last of all the wig, which Hammer had dressed every day with his own hands, hung over the knob of the chair back with a knowing cock.

But Algernon Hammer was dead—frozen stiff by the rigour of that place and the weakness of his heart. His eyes were open and he held his hand half-stretched out as if to assist his master to get up.

But neither one nor the other of those two should rise again—till That Day.

. . . . .

"I have come to make my report, Kid—I mean Mister McGhie," said a voice which has been heard more than once in this history.

"All right, Jackson," said the Kid; "signals all clear—go ahead!"

The unchristian cognomen of Knifer has never once been uttered on the western side of the ocean, three thousand miles from which these two now found themselves in a little rude cabin, the windows of which commanded a straggling mining camp.

"The by-products have not averaged so well this week, sir," said Jackson—Foreman Jackson of the "Patricia" Mine, apologetically; "but to mak' up for that, the whole clean up is more nor a hundred ounces better!"

"In a fortnight I'll have another stamp dropping,"

said the Kid, biting the end of a pencil. "Well—all right, so far—and the men, Jackson? No trouble with them, I suppose?"

"No, sir, not to speak of," said the ex-Knifer, a little reluctantly.

"What is it? Out with it, Jackson!"

The Kid was master here and now—a thing his father had never been anywhere, chief of a clan though he might be.

"Well, sir, to tell you the truth," said Foreman Jackson, "there's a man, name of Scully—a tough from 'way back—and he has a bad influence on the men."

"Why, fire him!" the Kid's eyes sparkled. "Why can't you fire him, Jackson? Do you think Mr. Hearne pays us to run the 'Patricia' as a free-lunch bar for 'toughs'?"

"Well," said the ex-professor of "St. Jacob's," "I'm against all violence——!"

"You?"

"Yes, sir," said the Knifer, a little sadly. "You see, if I was to begin, I don't know where it might end. And Mr. Molesay, sir, *he* made me promise—before I left——"

"Very well, then," said the Kid, with decision. "Then I must do it myself!"

He went out. There was a noise of what might mildly be called a small discussion. The Knifer moved to the window of the wooden shanty. He set his nails into his palms to stop himself from going out to take a hand.

"Oh, the young 'un!" he said—"such a young 'un!"

Then the Kid—McGhie's Kid, that was—came back again, breathing hard.

"Chucked!" he said. "You'll have no more trouble, Jackson. I gave him his wages and walking ticket, and saw him start across the divide for Forty Mile City! I'm like you, Jackson—against all un-

necessary violence. But I will not have your orders disregarded!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Foreman Andrew Jackson, looking, with a curious admiration, at Mr. Molesay's kid of the goats, who had turned out a man.

"What a Kid!" he murmured, as he went out with the weekly statement in his hand, examined and countersigned.

. . . . .

Baby Lant is still to be had for the asking. Many, indeed, have asked and have not received. Heiress of Egham—a new and remodelled Egham—young, rich—*and* Baby Lant—yet in spite of all, her time has not yet come.

She pets Marthe and her babes, and talks to her about the Kid's wonderful career. She upholds the hands of Mr. Molesay, and, I think, pets him a little, too. And when Patricia comes across the herring pond in winter—for she loves not the cold—they have great times shopping, for themselves and for all the world. Pat talks chiefly of a younger Hearne Mackenzie, and buys the most extravagant apparel for that young gentleman, who (it appears) is his father's image, only, if anything, handsomer. Certainly, at present, he makes more noise in the world. Three Ridings is very gay in winter, and some day Baby Lant is going back with her sister (as she says) to look for another "Hearne."

"You will have to wait till this little one grows, then," says Pat, "for there is no one in the world like his father!"

Which, after the years, is an excellent and most wifely spirit.

. . . . .

It was a November evening, early dark, and the two girls, Pat and Baby Lant, found themselves cozily installed at the house in Glencairn Crescent, which the Eghamites and the Three Ridings people

had found so convenient that they had retained it, paying the rent between them.

"To-night," said Baby Lant, "do you know what we are going to do?"

"I do not," said Patricia, "but if it is anything disgraceful, or of the genus madcap (to which you belong), I warn you that, as a respectable married woman and the mother of a family, I shall have nothing to do with it!"

"Do you see these?" said Baby Lant.

She pointed to a pile of clothes—doubtful, second-hand-looking clothes—on her sister's bed.

"Take them off my quilt—at once—at once!" cried Patricia, with quite unusual violence. And without waiting for Baby Lant to obey, she settled the matter herself with a single clutch.

"I got these through Ashbucket Moll," said Baby Lant, watching but not offering to assist her operations. "They have been well washed and are now as clean as—your precious heir to the title of Athabasca just after his bath! Well, we are going to put these on——"

"You may—I won't!" cried Patricia, fervently.

"Yes, you will," said Baby Lant, "when you know what it is for. We are going to see Mr. Molesay in his new B. I. P. He has lots of help now—from priests to *prima donnas*. But this is his own night. Anyone can ask for advice, or stop and speak to him alone. He won't know us in these things. And if anybody wants good advice, Pat, it's you, with such a temper as you've got, and the abuse you deal out to a loving and innocent younger sister!"

"Fiddlesticks!" said Patricia. But all the same she let herself be overpersuaded. Besides, she did want to see the little missionary, for in spite of husband and heir to a lordship, in spite of half a province of pine forests and possible gold mines, she was the old Pat still.

They took the steep way down to the Cowgate.

They were two poor women to look at. Baby Lant wore a veil, but the open, summer-tanned look on Patricia's face did as well. They walked purposefully, and so no one spoke to them. For, of course, that is the secret.

As of yore, the British Imperial Palace was glittering with lights. It was after the hour of public meeting, but they entered a smaller hall where there were women with bowed heads, and men who sat looking straight in front of them with that stony stare which tells of a suddenly smitten conscience—that is, among such as dwell in the Cowgate.

As Atalanta foretold, Mr. Molesay was alone on the platform. He was reading slowly a chapter out of the Gospel of Matthew. But he turned hither and thither, searching for this text and that other. His hair had changed from silver to something like the radiance of frosty starlight. His face, turned to the little book in his hand, had upon it a glow warm and kindly as firelight.

He was reciting his text a second time before "speaking a few words upon it"—Mr. Molesay's words were always few and excellently ordered.

"And everyone" (he began slowly, spacing the words) "that hath forsaken . . . houses, or brethren, or sisters, . . . or father, or mother, . . ."

He lifted his eyes and, under the plain dress and poor woman's disguise, he knew Patricia at the first glance. But his voice, though it checked, did not falter. He went on:

"Or wife, or children, . . . or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold . . ."

Then the voice of the reader broke away in a kind of gust, or gale of the spirit.

"An hundredfold they shall receive!" he cried. "Ah, it would need to be—it would need to be! For how hard is that giving up—O Lord, Thou alone knowest!"

He closed the book. The two women sobbed, Patricia and Baby Lant together—they knew not very well why. But on their faces were the only tears. For, when the little missionary, Archbold Molesay of the silver head and the childlike spirit, met them he was smiling. His eyes were glad, and he said only, "Is it well with you, my friends?"

And through their tears Pat and Baby Lant answered him, after the fashion of their nation, by another question:

"And with you, Mr. Molesay, is all well?"

And taking his eyes for the first time off Patricia's face, he regarded the emptying halls of the B. I. P. Without, through the open doors, he saw the damp, misty shiver of the Cowgate street lamps on the greasy paving stones, and he answered, "It is well!"

And, indeed, it was well.

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